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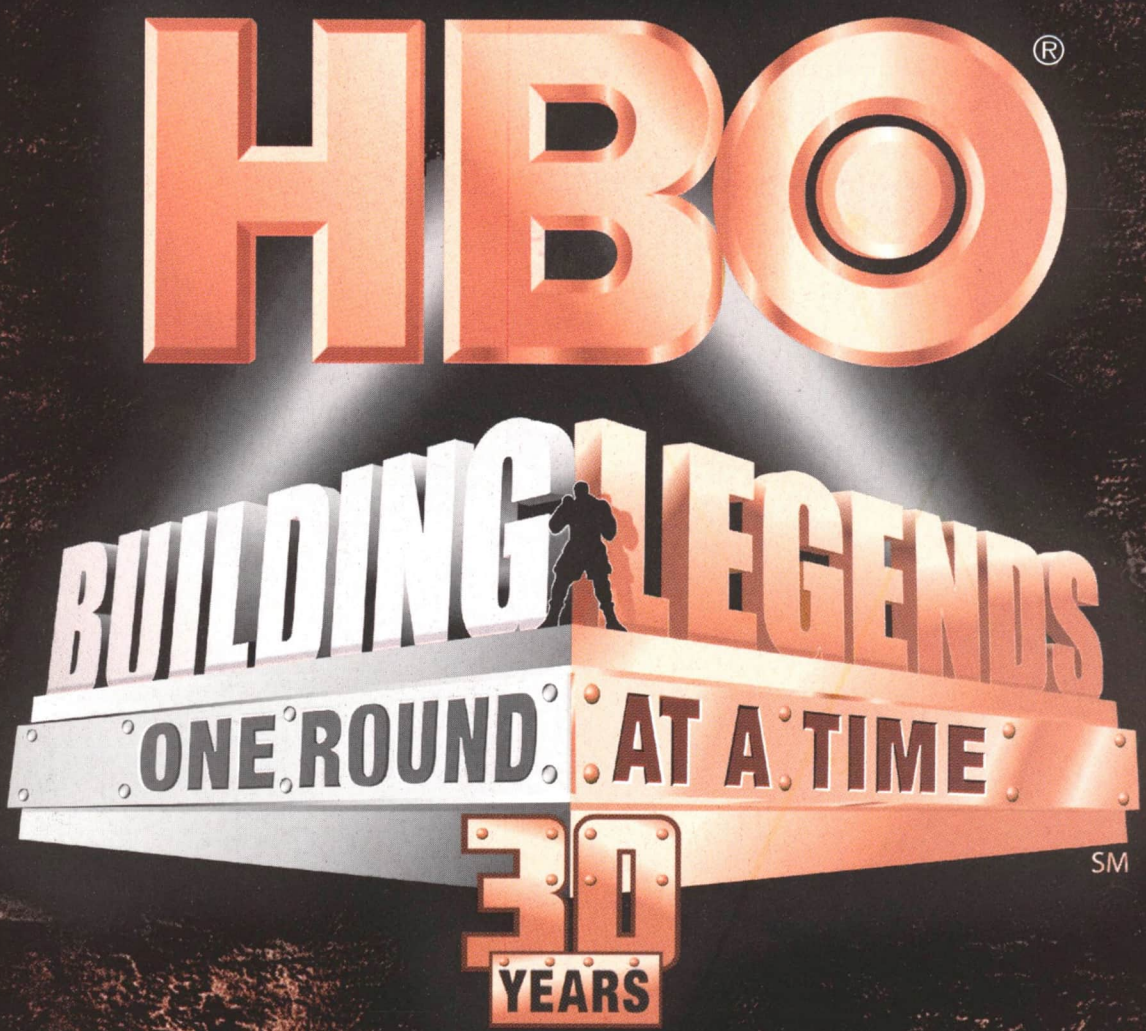
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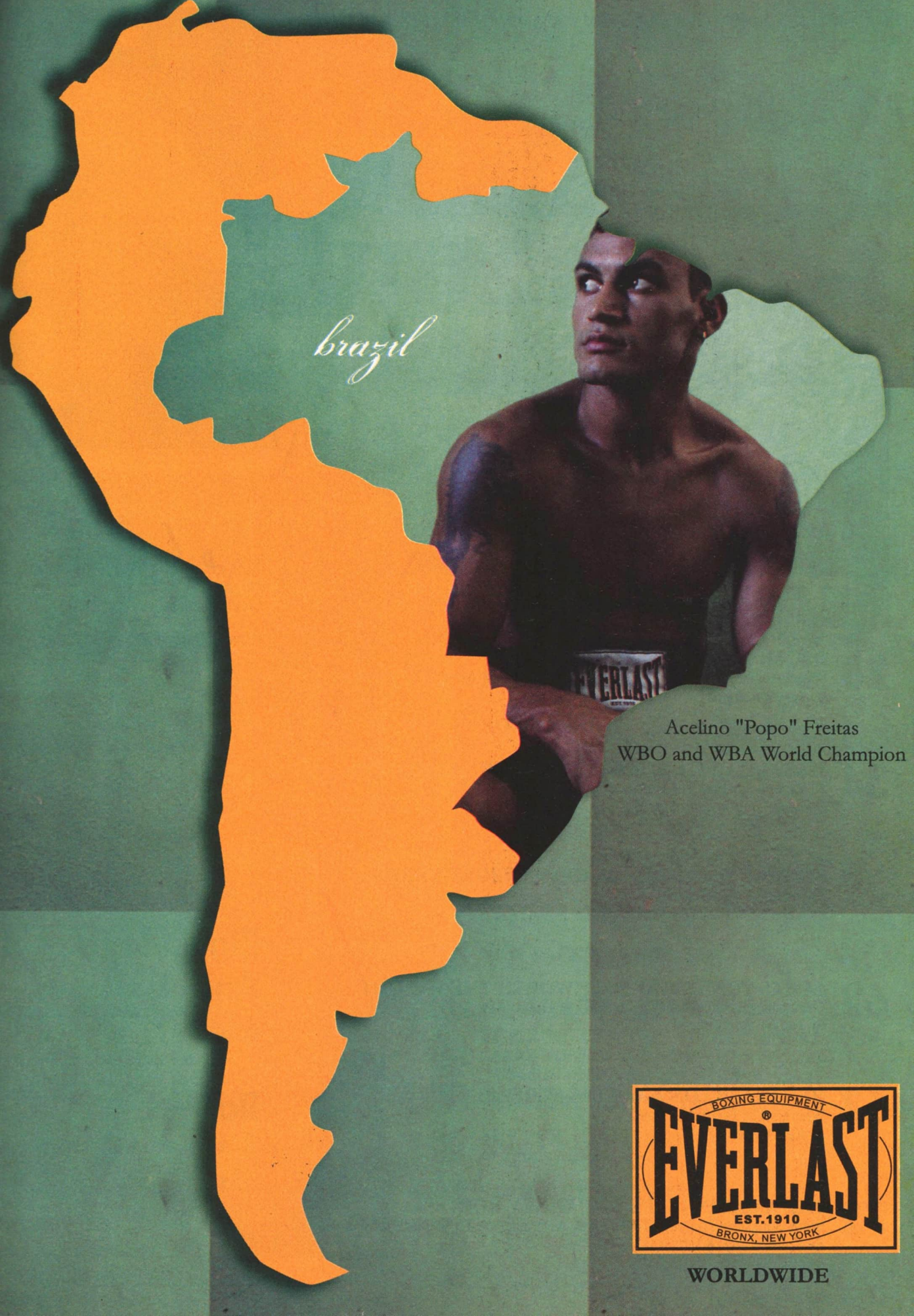

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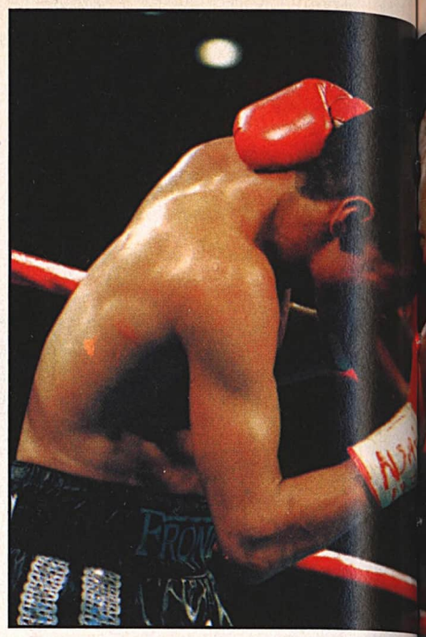

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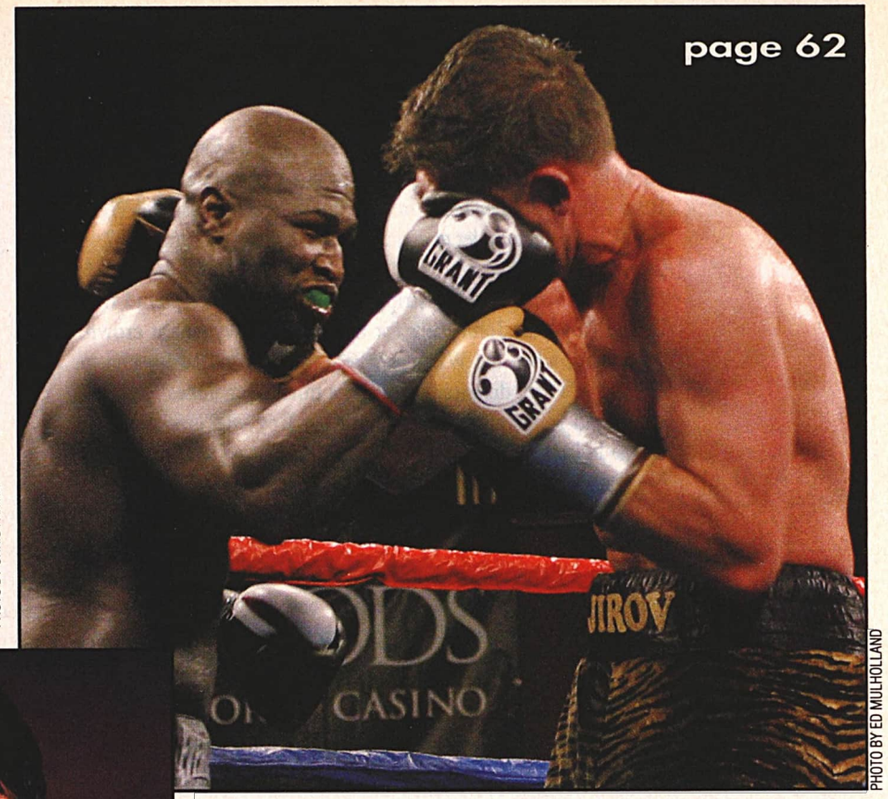
PHOTO BY CHRIS FARINA



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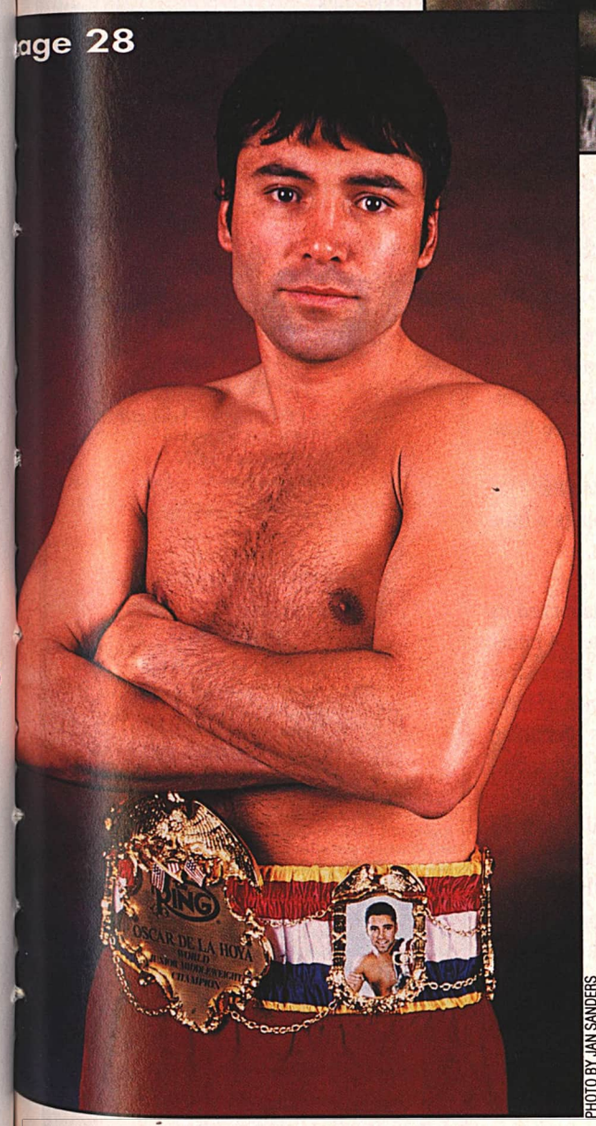

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RINGSIDE

Some readers might be surprised to see that Roy Jones is still listed as light heavyweight champion in this issue's edition of "THE RING Ratings" *(page 14)*. After all, didn't he relinquish the WBC and WBA belts in order to continue his heavyweight campaign?

Well, yes and no.

The IBF had already stripped Jones of its 175-pound title before Roy beat John Ruiz for the WBA heavyweight crown. Afterward, when the WBA and WBC set a deadline for him to choose in which division to remain a titleholder, Jones' promoter, Murad Muhammad, announced that Roy was going to give up the light heavy belts and keep the WBA heavyweight strap.

THE RING, however, does not make decisions regarding its championship policy based on what any of the alphabet organizations say or do.

Moreover, I see no reason a fighter should not hold championships in more than one division, providing he can make the weight and defend both titles on a reasonably regular basis. Henry Armstrong successfully juggled three world championships simultaneously back in the 1930s, and people are still talking about it. If the idiots who run boxing today were in charge back then, the sport would have been deprived of one of its greatest feats.

Like Armstrong, Jones is a very special fighter, capable of special things. If he wants to eventually drop back down to 175 pounds and kick Antonio Tarver's butt (as he promised to do when Tarver interrupted the Jones-Ruiz postfight press conference) why not let him try?

In an effort to gain a better handle on the situation, THE RING contacted Jones and asked if he wanted us to retain him as light heavyweight champion. The answer was yes, as Jones claimed he was planning only two bouts as a heavyweight.

Of course, Roy may change his mind and never fight as a light heavyweight again, but at this juncture there's no reason to make a premature assumption one way or another. One of the beauties of THE RING championship policy is that we don't threaten to strip champions in order to generate sanctioning fees. Instead, we give them room to be the best that they can be, unfettered of mindless mandatories.

If future events or word from Jones makes it clear that he has abandoned the 175-pound class forever, THE RING will declare the title vacant. But giving things a little time to work themselves out usually proves wiser than rushing to judgment.

***

It was great to see live boxing back on network television when NBC launched its *Budweiser Boxing Series* in early-May. The fights were pretty good and the 1.4 rating (1.5 million viewers) pleased the network. But low ratings were not the reason free TV has been devoid of boxing for 11 years. No, it was sponsors' reluctance to have their products associated with boxing that caused its disappearance. This is something everybody in the industry should keep in mind now that the game has received another chance to work its way back into the mainstream.

Obviously, everybody from the fighters to the promoters to the officials involved in NBC's latest dalliance with the Sweet Science have to bend over backward to insure that nothing occurs during one of the broadcasts that will prompt NBC to drop boxing again. But it's also imperative that there are no new scandals throughout the sport, because any kind of disgrace, even one that has nothing to do with the *Budweiser* series, could limit the sport to cable-TV for another decade.

Nigel Collins
Editor-in-Chief

Volume 82, No. 9 September 2003

The RING

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ADVERTISING DIRECTOR
Vincent Bellissima
(215) 643-6385
vbellissima@kappapublishing.com

ADVERTISING ASSISTANT
Dianne Weber

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ROUND ONE

THE 26-MILE MIRACLE

Michael Watson joined a cast of thousands on April 13 at Greenwich Park to start the London Marathon, a race that over the years has witnessed countless demonstrations of remarkable courage. Watson was different, the courage he showed reducing many who followed him along the 26-mile route to tears. It was moving because Watson moved at a pace that conveyed the wonder of his story: It took him six days to reach the finish line on The Mall, but it was the first time he had walked unaided for any substantial distance since his fateful bout with Chris Eubank in September 1991, a fight that had left him in a coma for 40 days.

For many years Watson was confined to a wheelchair, having been kept alive only after undergoing six brain operations. He had been floored by a powerful right uppercut thrown by Eubank at the end of the 11th round of a grueling fight, and when the fight was stopped in the next round, he quickly slipped into a coma. His family members were advised to switch off his life support, but they continued their vigil and he continued his fight.

"I only came out of that ordeal with the help of God. He kept me alive, and to this day I keep that in my heart. I know I am only here because of Him," said Watson, who completed the marathon to raise funds for the Brain and Spine Foundation.

His movement is curtailed by partial paralysis down the left side of his body. He went off to training camp to prepare for this test of endurance. He was fighting again.

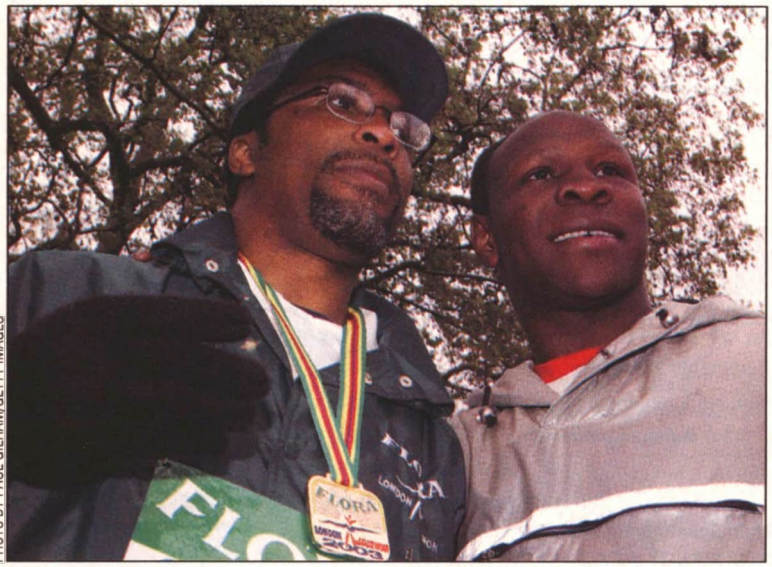


PHOTO BY PAUL GILHAM/GETTY IMAGES

Watson, with Eubank, after crossing the finish line

"I prepared like I would have prepared for a fight," he declared. "I worked, I sacrificed, and I won. It was a wonderful feeling."

It was a daunting feeling as he set out. For the first time since that September night 12 years earlier, he was resolved to making his way alone, to moving on his feet without a shoulder to lean on. The marathon schedule was two to three miles each morning and the same each afternoon. Each mile took him an hour, and he rested and slept in a support bus that followed him the whole way.

He had received a message of support from Muhammad Ali, which was particularly special to him. Ali had visited him in the hospital during his recovery from a subdural hematoma, and he wrote to Watson to say he was humbled to know that his "friendship shown you in years past has been a positive influence in your own life of incredible achievement." And in that final stretch, with thousands of people returning to pay tribute to his achievement, Watson walked with Eubank alongside him, a poignant end to a remarkable journey.

"I forgave Chris long ago," Watson said. "There is no bitterness in my heart about what happened."

What happened in April, what Watson did, warmed the hearts of everyone who has come to know this warrior.

—Brian Doogan

WBC: THE "B" STANDS FOR BANKRUPT

Is Graciano Rocchigiani the most powerful boxer in the sport? The former titleholder's career is winding down, but he and his attorneys have forced the once-mighty WBC to seek bankruptcy protection in San Juan, Puerto Rico, in order to delay the collection of the $30-million judgment recently entered in Rocchigiani's favor.

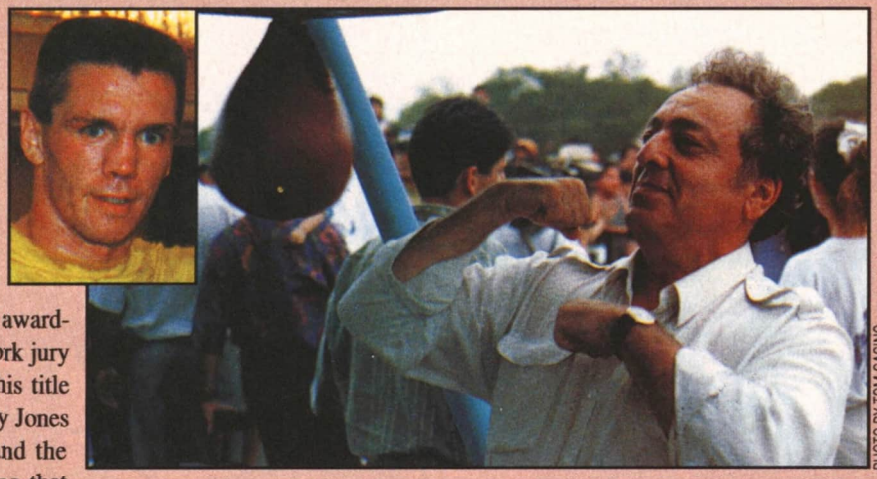


PHOTO BY TOM CASINO

Jose Sulaiman is fighting for the WBC's life thanks to Rocchigiani (inset)

The 39-year-old light heavyweight was awarded the huge judgment last fall by a New York jury over the WBC's decision to strip him of his title in 1998. Rocchigiani won the title after Roy Jones vacated it, but Jones asked for it back and the WBC obliged a few months later, claiming that Rocchigiani's title was merely a "typographical error."

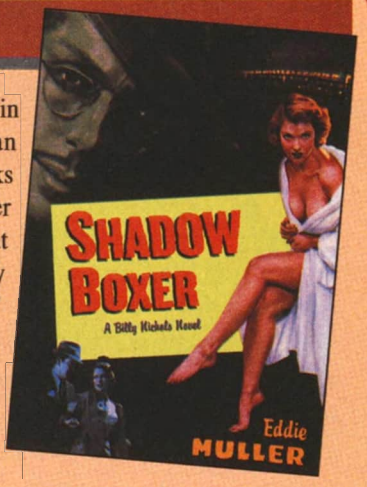
The WBC has already asked the bankruptcy judge, Enrique S. Lamoutte, for permission to appeal the $30-million judgment. The WBC's petition was filed under Chapter 11 of the Bankruptcy Code, which allows the WBC to remain in business and provides an automatic stay of judgment, meaning Rocchigiani is prevented from immediately collecting any money.

Although the WBC bravely issued a press release claiming the bankruptcy "will not affect in the least the great world champions holding WBC titles, or any promotion or promoter organizing world title bouts, or any other boxing-related activity sponsored by the World Boxing Council," in reality, the WBC's authority has been weakened. An example is the Mexico-based organization's indecision about whether to strip heavyweight champ Lennox Lewis, who ignored his mandatory defense obligation by signing to fight Kirk Johnson instead of WBC number-one Vitali Klitschko.

In order to continue in business, the WBC will have to provide the bankruptcy court with a plan to pay Rocchigiani the money he is owed. "We will pursue Rocchigiani's rights in the bankruptcy case and see where this goes," said Richard Dolan, an attorney for Rocchigiani.

—Scott Shaffer

THE BOXING BOOKSHELF



Toward the end of his second caper, this one unraveling a phony land investment scheme whose tentacles reach into the very upper crust of 1940s San Francisco, one of the principals in the deal asks Billy Nichols, "Haven't you left your beat, Mr. Nichols? Shouldn't you be concerning yourself with this week's boxing contests?"

I confess that the very same thought crossed my mind as I read *Shadow Boxer* (Scribner, 259 pages, hardcover, $24), Eddie Muller's second installment in his crime noir series featuring *San Francisco Inquirer* boxing columnist Billy Nichols, whose 2002 debut in *The Distance* was pure fun for fight fans who like their mysteries soaked in sweat, testosterone, and boxing lore.

Nichols is still "Mr. Boxing" in the sequel, but while pugs and ex-pugs pop up virtually everyplace in it, the story about corruption and malfeasance in high places doesn't revolve around or delve as deeply into the Frisco fight scene the way the first novel did, nor feature as many cameo appearances by some of the real life boxing characters Muller learned about from his father, Eddie Muller, Golden State journalism's real life "Mr. Boxing."

There are a few bows in that direction, such as an apartment super who looks like "Tony Galento's uglier brother," and a line "that fell about as flat as Buddy Baer against [Joe] Louis." But the major focus this time is not, as in the title of Nichols' *Inquirer* column, "Through The Ropes."

This isn't to say that the second Billy Nichols mystery isn't entertaining and perhaps even better written than its progenitor. But when "Mr. Boxing's" attention wanders so far afield that at one point he's even willing to give away his *RING Record Books*, 1941-'45, because "I don't need 'em anymore," you worry that down the road he'll be covering politics, fashion, or something else really appalling and sleazy.

—Pete Ehrmann

TV FIGHTS OF THE MONTH

DATE	WINNER/LOSER	NETWORK	DIVISION	SIGNIFICANCE	MATCHUP	RESULT
4-12-03	Cruz Carbajal KO 2 Steve Dotse	PPV	jf	B	B-	C+
Excellent win for Carbajal; by end of first round, Dotse didn't know what continent he was on						
4-12-03	**Derrick Gainer W 12 Oscar Leon**	**PPV**	**WBA f**	**A-**	**C+**	**C-**
You get the sense Gainer couldn't be exciting if he had flames shooting from his gloves						
4-12-03	**Marco Antonio Barrera KO 4 Kevin Kelley**	**PPV**	**World f**	**A**	**D-**	**D**
Kelley was shot when Shelly Finkel had hair; if you fell for the hype, shame on you						
4-18-03	Michael Grant KO 8 Gilbert Martinez	ESPN2	h	B-	D+	D
Hey Teddy, we know what Grant's problem is: You're not yelling at him enough						
4-19-03	Miguel Cotto KO 4 Joel Perez	HBO	jw	B-	C	C+
Why not a move to 135 for Cotto? He's been fighting mostly lightweights anyway						
4-19-03	**Floyd Mayweather W 12 Victoriano Sosa**	**HBO**	**World l**	**A**	**C+**	**C+**
Will someone tell us why Mayweather never mentions Stevie Johnston?						
4-24-03	Ishe Smith W 10 Sam Garr	Show	jm	C	B-	C
Smith may be the goods, but the name needs work; how about Marvelous Ishe Smith? Smokin' Ishe Smith?						
4-24-03	Diego Corrales KO 3 Felix St. Kitts	Show	l	C+	D-	C
Anyone else notice that afterward Corrales called out everybody but his ex?						
4-25-03	Anthony Bonsante KO 11 Tony Ayala	ESPN2	sm	C+	B-	B-
Kudos to Bonsante for not being intimidated, kudos to Ayala for taking his beating like a man						
4-25-03	Verno Phillips W 10 Bronco McKart	ESPN2	m	B	B+	C+
Broken hand or not, this was going to be a tough assignment for McKart; Phillips on a roll						
4-26-03	**Antonio Tarver W 12 Montell Griffin**	**HBO**	**IBF/WBC lh**	**A**	**B+**	**C**
Call us kooky, but we think Tarver against Roy Jones would be ugly but interesting						
4-26-03	**James Toney W 12 Vassiliy Jirov**	**HBO**	**IBF c**	**A+**	**A**	**A**
If you weren't on your feet screaming in the 12th round, you might want to get off the Valium						
5-2-03	Hector Quiroz KO 9 Antonio Diaz	Telef	w	B-	B	A
Quiroz evens the score in magnificent slugfest; rubber match, anyone?						
5-3-03	Rogelio Martinez W 10 Freddie Cuevas	Telem	jm	C	B+	B-
Sometimes it just works out that the bigger, stronger guy wins						
5-3-03	Miguel Huerta W 8 Darling Jimenez	NBC	l	C-	B-	B
Who says judges don't see bodypunches? And could you imagine losing to a guy named Darling?						
5-3-03	Rocky Juarez KO 6 Frank Archuleta	NBC	f	B-	B+	B-
They picked the right guy to showcase in Juarez, who improves every time out; damn, this felt good						
5-3-03	**Jorge Arce Tech. Win 6 Melchor Cob-Castro**	**PPV**	**WBC jfl**	**A-**	**B**	**C+**
Arce blamed his weight trouble on being "out of control"; he weighs 108 pounds—what'd he do, sneak an extra ice chip?						
5-3-03	**Erik Morales KO 5 Fernando Velardez**	**PPV**	**WBC f**	**A**	**C-**	**C+**
Morales brilliant again; it'll be a crime if he and Barrera don't meet a third time						
5-3-03	**Oscar De La Hoya KO 7 Yory Boy Campas**	**PPV**	**World jm**	**A+**	**D-**	**C+**
If you paid 50 bucks for this, good for you; by the way, how's that lobotomy working out?						

Category Explanation: "Significance"—The importance of the bout to the division and the fighters' futures; "Matchup"—The quality of the fighters and the prefight determination of how their styles will mesh; "Result"—How the bout turned out, from the viewer's perspective.

(World/Alphabet title fights in **bold** type)

Division key: h—heavyweight; c—cruiserweight; lh—light heavyweight; sm—super middleweight; m—middleweight; jm—junior middleweight; w—welterweight; jw—junior welterweight; l—lightweight; jl—junior lightweight; f—featherweight; jf—junior featherweight; b—bantamweight; jb—junior bantamweight; fl—flyweight; jfl—junior flyweight; s—strawweight

Network key: PPV—Pay-Per-View; Show—Showtime; FOXSN—Fox SportsNet; Uni—Univision; Telef—Telefutura; Telem—Telemundo

HAT TRICK FOR MARQUEZ

Former IBF junior middleweight titleholder Raul Marquez' mother was never all that thrilled about her son's boxing career.

"She wanted me to quit right after I won the nationals," said Marquez. "She told me to get into broadcasting. I told her, 'Mom, it's not as easy as that.'"

But due to what the 31-year-old Marquez calls "being in the right place at the right time," his mother now gets to see her son on TV without having to watch him get punched in the face.

Marquez' broadcasting career started modestly enough with a few guest spots, but three years ago he became HBO Latino's regular ringside analyst.

"I was so nervous and tense my first broadcast, I was stuttering," recalled Marquez.

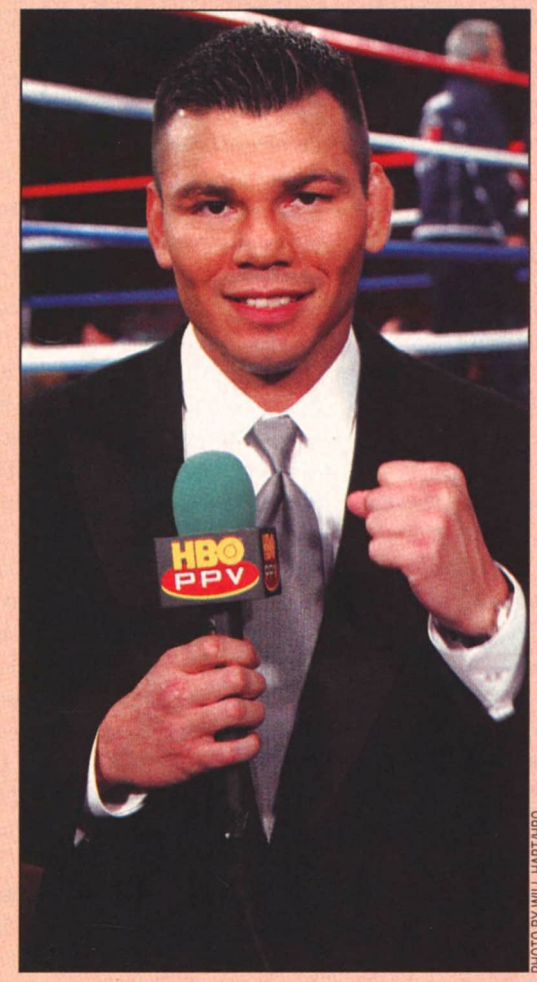


PHOTO BY WILL HART/HBO

Marquez: One busy broadcaster

But Marquez has worked hard and improved considerably since then, and the weekend of the Oscar De La Hoya-Yory Boy Campas fight saw him appear on three separate networks on the same day. He started out on Saturday afternoon working for Telemundo, and later, when the same card became part of NBC's first boxing show in 11 years, Marquez was again behind the microphone. Then in the evening, he jumped over to HBO Latino for the Spanish-language pay-per-view broadcast of De La Hoya-Campas.

"I worked from 8 a.m. to 11 p.m.," said Marquez, "and was totally drained and exhausted at the end of the day. But the guys were happy with me, and Jim Lampley told me he thought I did a good job."

The fact that he's bilingual has been a major advantage for Marquez, especially in a market where Spanish-speaking fans make up such a large portion of the audience. It is a quality that Marquez is passing on to his three sons.

"When I ask my six-year-old, Arturo, why it's important to speak both English and Spanish, he says, 'When you grow up, you'll make more money.'"

Even though his TV career is progressing nicely, Marquez still wants to fight, and feels that he showed enough during his inconclusive three-round (cut eye) no-contest with Shane Mosley to keep going, providing he can get the right fights.

"I only want money fights," said Marquez, 34-2 (23) with 1 no-contest. "There's been some talk of a match with Daniel Santos or Jermain Taylor. But if I don't get the right fights, I'll stick to broadcasting."

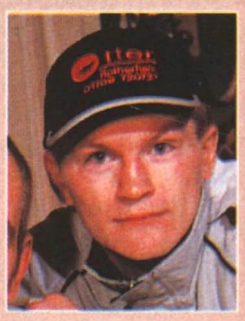
That would certainly make his mother happy.

—Nigel Collins

OUTSIDE THE ROPES

Cadena: Hoping to fight again

For those who saw or heard about junior welterweight prospect **Freddie Cadena's** collapse and subsequent seizure following his early-April sixth-round TKO loss to **Jesse Feliciano**, the news is good. Cadena was diagnosed with severe dehydration and a bad concussion, but no brain damage. According to manager **Pat Lynch**, Cadena intends to undergo more tests, but is hopeful that he will continue his boxing career ... Wild and crazy welterweight champion **Ricardo Mayorga** is in hot water, facing charges in Nicaragua for promoting illegal car racing and defying police officers. In mid-April, Mayorga, in trying to avoid arrest for running the street races, allegedly attempted to run over a policeman with his car. Mayorga was placed under house arrest ... Junior welterweight contender **Zab Judah** settled with promoter Main Events in mid-April, allowing him to sign with **Don King**, as he'd been trying to do for close to a year. Main Events received an undisclosed amount of money, plus an undisclosed "involvement" in Judah's next three fights ... One fighter King won't be signing is **Mike Tyson**, despite premature reports in late-April that said Tyson would be re-joining with his former promoter. King reportedly courted Tyson aggressively, attempting to sign him and convince him to drop his $100-million lawsuit against the Hall of Fame promoter, but sources close to Tyson said the offers were ultimately rebuffed ... In early-May, **Sugar Shane Mosley** signed with a new promoter, **Gary Shaw**. Mosley had been a promotional free agent since leaving **Cedric Kushner** in 2001 ... Former heavyweight titleholder **Trevor Berbick** was cleared of burglary charges in late-April when the Kingston, Jamaica, woman who accused him of breaking into her home and stealing several household items—Berbick's sister-in-law **Gwendolyn Facey**—dropped the charges. Berbick maintained that the items were planted in his house, and Facey ultimately asked only that the stolen items, which police discovered in Berbick's home, be returned to her ... An 11-person panel of Maine politicians voted 9-2 in late-April to abolish the Maine Athletic Commission. The absence of a commission doesn't mean the end of boxing in the state, but it means that a commission from out of state would have to come in and supervise boxing events ... Not only did **Ricky Hatton** draw 14,000 fans to his Manchester, England, fight with **Vince Phillips** in early-April, he also drew 1,008 firearms in a ticket-for-guns exchange throughout the month leading up to the fight. "I am delighted that more than 1,000 potentially lethal items have been exchanged for boxing tickets," said promoter **Frank Warren** ... *Sports Illustrated* compiled a list of "The 101 Most Influential Minorities In Sports" in the May 5 issue, and boxing was fairly well-represented. Don King checked in at number 15, HBO exec **Kery Davis** was 24, **Oscar De La Hoya** was 63, **Lennox Lewis** was 69, and **Roy Jones** was 70. Also, **Joe Louis Barrow**, the son of **Joe Louis** and the executive director of a golf organization called The First Tee, was ranked 83rd ... Spanish-language blow-by-blow announcer **Norberto Longo** died of a heart attack in mid-April at the age of 62. Longo provided commentary for more than 120 major title fights, and finished his long career working for Telemundo.



Hatton: Collected 1,000 guns

THE PUNCHLINES

"I am not looking past Shane Mosley."

—Oscar De La Hoya, committing a Freudian slip prior to his fight against Yory Boy Campas

"The first time he was afraid of me and he respected me. This time around, he is horrified of me and will respect me even more."

—Ricardo Mayorga, on his rematch with Vernon Forrest

AL KRATZER'S VIEW

The RING®
"THE BIBLE OF BOXING"

RATINGS ANALYSIS

POUND-FOR-POUND

1. ROY JONES
   Heavyweight/Light Heavyweight
2. BERNARD HOPKINS
   Middleweight
3. MARCO ANTONIO BARRERA
   Featherweight
4. OSCAR DE LA HOYA
   Junior Middleweight
5. KOSTYA TSZYU
   Junior Welterweight
6. ERIK MORALES
   Featherweight
7. FLOYD MAYWEATHER
   Lightweight
8. RICARDO MAYORGA
   Welterweight
9. LENNOX LEWIS
   Heavyweight
10. VERNON FORREST
    Welterweight

(For period ended May 6, 2003)

HEAVYWEIGHTS: No changes.

CRUISERWEIGHTS: James Toney (fourth last issue) punches his way into the number-one position with a unanimous decision over Vassiliy Jirov (first last issue), who only slips one spot due to the close nature of the bout. Jean-Marc Mormeck (second last issue) and Wayne Braithwaite (third last issue) fall to third and fourth, respectively, to accommodate Toney's rise and Jirov's fall.

LIGHT HEAVYWEIGHTS: An explanation of why THE RING still lists Roy Jones as world champion can be found in this issue's "Ringside" column *(page 6)*. Montell Griffin tumbles from fourth to sixth after suffering a one-sided decision loss to number-one contender Antonio Tarver. Griffin's demotion pushes up Mehdi Sahnoune (fifth last issue) and Julio Gonzalez (sixth last issue) one place each to fourth and fifth, respectively.

SUPER MIDDLEWEIGHTS: No changes.

MIDDLEWEIGHTS: Harry Simon (first last issue) exits due to the fact that he hasn't fought in more than a year. His departure allows everybody ranked below Simon last issue to move up one position and Julio Garcia to come aboard at number 10.

JUNIOR MIDDLEWEIGHTS: Verno Phillips (ninth last issue) trades places with Bronco McKart (seventh last issue), following his decision over McKart.

WELTERWEIGHTS: Antonio Diaz (fifth last issue) and Ray Oliveira (10th last issue) are both gone after losses. The men who beat them, Hector Quiroz and Elio Ortiz, are now aboard at 10th and eighth, respectively. The shakeup also causes Michele Piccirillo (sixth last issue), Manuel Gomez (seventh last issue), and Andrew Lewis (eighth last issue) to move up one spot each.

JUNIOR WELTERWEIGHTS: No changes.

LIGHTWEIGHTS: No changes.

JUNIOR LIGHTWEIGHTS: No changes.

FEATHERWEIGHTS: Derrick Gainer moves from fourth to third on the strength of his win over Oscar Leon, while Naseem Hamed falls from third to fourth due to his continuing inactivity.

JUNIOR FEATHERWEIGHTS: No changes.

BANTAMWEIGHTS: Eidy Moya (fifth last issue) departs because he has not fought in more than a year. This pushes up everybody rated below him last issue one rung each and makes room for Ricardo Vargas to return at number 10.

JUNIOR BANTAMWEIGHTS: No changes.

FLYWEIGHTS: No changes.

JUNIOR FLYWEIGHTS: Hidenobu Honda (sixth last issue) is no longer campaigning at 108 pounds, so he comes out of the rankings, allowing everyone rated below him to move up a spot. Former 105-pound titleholder Kermin Guardia enters at number 10.

STRAWWEIGHTS: No changes.

POUND-FOR-POUND: No changes. ■

THE RING RATINGS

For Period Ended May 6, 2003

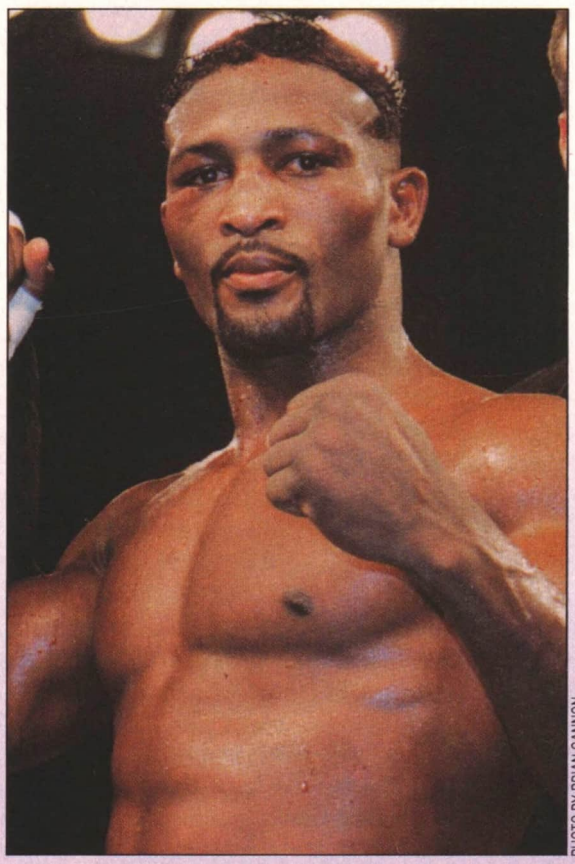


PHOTO BY BRIAN CANNON

Julio Garcia enters the middleweight rankings at number 10

How Our Ratings Are Compiled

Fighters recognized as champions by THE RING are rated at the top of their division, with the top 10 contenders listed below.

Championship vacancies can be filled in one of two ways: by unifying all three alphabet titles in a division; or by winning a box-off between THE RING'S number-one and number-two contenders, or, in certain instances, a box-off between our number-one and number-three contenders.

The only three occasions when a fighter will lose his championship status are when he retires, moves to another weight division, or is defeated in a championship bout.

Ratings By The Editors
Records By Fight Fax Inc.

HEAVYWEIGHTS
Weight Unlimited

Champ: LENNOX LEWIS
England 40-2-1 (31)

1. **CHRIS BYRD**
Flint, MI 36-2 (20)
2. **CORRIE SANDERS**
South Africa 39-2 (29)
3. **ROY JONES**
Pensacola, FL 48-1 (38)
4. **EVANDER HOLYFIELD**
Atlanta, GA 38-6-2 (25)
5. **DAVID TUA**
New Zealand 42-3-1 (37)
6. **HASIM RAHMAN**
Baltimore, MD 35-4-1 (29)
7. **MIKE TYSON**
Catskill, NY 50-4 (44)
8. **WLADIMIR KLITSCHKO**
Ukraine 40-2 (37)
9. **JOHN RUIZ**
Chelsea, MA 38-5-1 (27)
10. **VITALI KLITSCHKO**
Ukraine 32-1 (31)

JR. MIDDLEWEIGHTS
Weight Limit: 154 pounds

Champ: OSCAR DE LA HOYA
Los Angeles, CA 36-2 (29)

1. **WINKY WRIGHT**
St. Petersburg, FL 45-3 (25)
2. **FERNANDO VARGAS**
Oxnard, CA 22-2 (20)
3. **JAVIER CASTILLEJO**
Spain 54-5 (36)
4. **DANIEL SANTOS**
Puerto Rico 26-2-1 (20)
5. **SHANE MOSLEY**
Pomona, CA 38-2 (35)
6. **KASSIM OUMA**
W. Palm Beach, FL 16-1-1 (11)
7. **VERNO PHILLIPS**
Aurora, CO 35-9-1 (18)
8. **ALEX GARCIA**
Mexico 21-0 (20)
9. **BRONCO McKART**
Monroe, MI 45-5 (29)
10. **ALEX BUNEMA**
Dallas, TX 20-3-2 (12)

FEATHERWEIGHTS
Weight Limit: 126 pounds

Champ: MARCO ANTONIO BARRERA
Mexico 57-3 (40)

1. **ERIK MORALES**
Mexico 44-1 (33)
2. **JUAN MANUEL MARQUEZ**
Mexico 40-2 (32)
3. **DERRICK GAINER**
Pensacola, FL 39-5-1 (24)
4. **NASEEM HAMED**
England 36-1 (31)
5. **SCOTT HARRISON**
Scotland 19-1-1 (9)
6. **MANUEL MEDINA**
Mexico 60-13 (27)
7. **JOHNNY TAPIA**
Albuquerque, NM 52-3-2 (28)
8. **FRANKIE TOLEDO**
Paterson, NJ 42-6-1 (17)
9. **LEHLO LEDWABA**
South Africa 34-2-1 (22)
10. **WILLIAM ABELYAN**
Glendale, CA 22-4-1 (11)

JR. FEATHERWEIGHTS
Weight Limit: 122 pounds

Champ: PAULIE AYALA
Ft. Worth, TX 34-2 (12)

1. **MANNY PACQUIAO**
Philippines 36-2-1 (27)
2. **OSCAR LARIOS**
Mexico 48-3-1 (33)
3. **SALIM MEDJKOUNE**
France 41-3-1 (21)
4. **JOSE LUIS VALBUENA**
Venezuela 22-2-1 (12)
5. **ISRAEL VAZQUEZ**
Mexico 33-3 (24)
6. **WILLIE JORRIN**
Sacramento, CA 29-1-1 (13)
7. **JOAN GUZMAN**
Dominican Republic 18-0 (14)
8. **OSAMU SATO**
Japan 26-2-2 (15)
9. **YODDAMRONG SITHYODTHONG**
Thailand 33-1-1 (18)
10. **NEDAL HUSSEIN**
Australia 30-1 (17)

BANTAMWEIGHTS
Weight Limit: 118 pounds

Champ: Vacant

1. **RAFAEL MARQUEZ**
Mexico 29-3 (27)
2. **VEERAPOL SAHAPROM**
Thailand 41-1-1 (29)
3. **TIM AUSTIN**
Cincinnati, OH 25-1-1 (22)
4. **JOHNNY BREDAHL**
Denmark 53-2 (26)
5. **CRUZ CARBAJAL**
Mexico 23-11-1 (19)
6. **TOSHIAKI NISHIOKA**
Japan 23-3-2 (14)
7. **PETE FRISSINA**
Tarpon Springs, FL 26-3-1 (15)
8. **SILENCE MABUZA**
South Africa 14-0 (13)
9. **GENARO GARCIA**
Mexico 28-4 (16)
10. **RICARDO VARGAS**
Mexico 34-9-3 (11)

CRUISERWEIGHTS
Weight Limit: 190 pounds

Champ: Vacant

1. **JAMES TONEY** Ann Arbor, MI 66-4-2 (42)
2. **VASSILIY JIROV** Kazakhstan 31-1 (27)
3. **JEAN-MARC MORMECK** France 29-2 (21)
4. **WAYNE BRAITHWAITE** Guyana 19-0 (16)
5. **JOHNNY NELSON** England 42-12-2 (28)
6. **GUILLERMO JONES** Panama 29-2-2 (22)
7. **EZRA SELLERS** Washington, D.C. 26-5 (24)
8. **O'NEIL BELL** Atlanta, GA 20-1-1 (19)
9. **VIRGIL HILL** Bismarck, ND 48-4 (23)
10. **SEBASTIAN ROTHMAN** South Africa 16-1-2 (12)

LIGHT HEAVYWEIGHTS
Weight Limit: 175 pounds

Champ: ROY JONES Pensacola, FL 48-1 (38)

1. **ANTONIO TARVER** Orlando, FL 21-1 (17)
2. **DARIUSZ MICHALCZEWSKI** Germany 48-0 (38)
3. **ERIC HARDING** Philadephia, PA 21-2-1 (7)
4. **MEHDI SAHNOUNE** France 24-0 (21)
5. **JULIO GONZALEZ** Huntington Beach, CA 33-1 (22)
6. **MONTELL GRIFFIN** Chicago, IL 44-4 (29)
7. **BRUNO GIRARD** France 42-3-2 (7)
8. **LOU DEL VALLE** Bronx, NY 31-3-1 (21)
9. **GEORGE JONES** Paterson, NJ 19-2 (13)
10. **CLINTON WOODS** England 34-2 (21)

SUPER MIDDLEWEIGHTS
Weight Limit: 168 pounds

Champ: Vacant

1. **SVEN OTTKE** Germany 30-0 (6)
2. **JOE CALZAGHE** Wales 35-0 (28)
3. **ANTWUN ECHOLS** Davenport, IA 29-4-1 (26)
4. **MARKUS BEYER** Germany 27-1 (11)
5. **ERIC LUCAS** Canada 36-5-3 (13)
6. **BYRON MITCHELL** Ozark, AL 25-2-1 (18)
7. **CHARLES BREWER** Philadelphia, PA 39-9 (27)
8. **MADS LARSEN** Denmark 44-1 (37)
9. **ANTHONY MUNDINE** Australia 18-1 (14)
10. **MANUEL SIACA** Puerto Rico 16-4 (15)

MIDDLEWEIGHTS
Weight Limit: 160 pounds

Champ: BERNARD HOPKINS Philadelphia, PA 42-2-1 (31)

1. **WILLIAM JOPPY** Washington, D.C. 34-2-1 (25)
2. **HOWARD EASTMAN** England 37-1 (34)
3. **ROBERT ALLEN** Atlanta, GA 35-4 (26)
4. **TITO MENDOZA** Panama 27-4 (20)
5. **SERGEY TATEVOSYAN** Russia 17-3 (13)
6. **HASSINE CHERIFI** France 33-6-1 (20)
7. **RODNEY JONES** Lafayette, LA 29-3 (18)
8. **ERLAND BETARE** France 35-7-2 (15)
9. **CARL DANIELS** St. Louis, MO 48-4-1 (30)
10. **JULIO GARCIA** Miami, FL 24-1 (10)

WELTERWEIGHTS
Weight Limit: 147 pounds

Champ: RICARDO MAYORGA Nicaragua 24-3-1 (22)

1. **VERNON FORREST** Atlanta, GA 35-1 (26)
2. **ANTONIO MARGARITO** Mexico 28-3 (19)
3. **CORY SPINKS** St. Louis, MO 31-2 (11)
4. **THOMAS DAMGAARD** Denmark 32-0 (25)
5. **MICHELE PICCIRILLO** Italy 37-2 (23)
6. **MANUEL GOMEZ** Mexico 21-10 (16)
7. **ANDREW LEWIS** Guyana 22-2-1 (20)
8. **ELIO ORTIZ** Venezuela 25-4 (19)
9. **JAWAID KHALIQ** England 21-1-1 (13)
10. **HECTOR QUIROZ** Mexico 37-7-1 (30)

JR. WELTERWEIGHTS
Weight Limit: 140 pounds

Champ: KOSTYA TSZYU Australia 30-1 (24)

1. **SHARMBA MITCHELL** Washington, D.C. 51-3 (30)
2. **ZAB JUDAH** Brooklyn, NY 28-1 (21)
3. **ARTURO GATTI** Jersey City, NJ 35-6 (28)
4. **DeMARCUS CORLEY** Washington, D.C. 28-1-1 (16)
5. **VIVIAN HARRIS** Brooklyn, NY 22-1-1 (16)
6. **MICKY WARD** Lowell, MA 38-12 (27)
7. **OKTAY URKAL** Germany 32-1 (10)
8. **BEN TACKIE** Ghana 24-3 (15)
9. **DIOBELYS HURTADO** Miami, FL 35-3-1 (23)
10. **RICKY HATTON** England 32-0 (24)

LIGHTWEIGHTS
Weight Limit: 135 pounds

Champ: FLOYD MAYWEATHER Grand Rapids, MI 30-0 (20)

1. **JOSE LUIS CASTILLO** Mexico 46-6-1 (42)
2. **STEVE JOHNSTON** Denver, CO 35-2-1 (17)
3. **PAUL SPADAFORA** Pittsburgh, PA 36-0 (14)
4. **LEONARD DORIN** Canada 21-0 (7)
5. **JUAN LAZCANO** El Paso, TX 32-2-1 (24)
6. **ANGEL MANFREDY** Gary, IN 41-6-1 (30)
7. **ARTUR GRIGORIAN** Uzbekistan 36-0 (22)
8. **ALEJANDRO GONZALEZ** Mexico 49-5-1 (33)
9. **JULIEN LORCY** France 53-3-2 (38)
10. **JUAN GOMEZ TRINIDAD** Puerto Rico 23-2 (16)

JR. LIGHTWEIGHTS
Weight Limit: 130 pounds

Champ: Vacant

1. **ACELINO FREITAS** Brazil 33-0 (30)
2. **JOEL CASAMAYOR** Miami, FL 29-1 (18)
3. **JESUS CHAVEZ** Mexico 39-2 (28)
4. **STEVE FORBES** Las Vegas, NV 23-1 (6)
5. **YODSANAN NANTHACHAI** Thailand 39-2-1 (32)
6. **PHILLIP NDOU** South Africa 30-1 (29)
7. **SIRIMONGKOL SINGMANASSAK** Thailand 40-1 (23)
8. **CARLOS HERNANDEZ** Bellflower, CA 38-3-1 (23)
9. **CASSIUS BALOYI** South Africa 28-1 (16)
10. **NATE CAMPBELL** Jacksonville, FL 23-1 (21)

JR. BANTAMWEIGHTS
Weight Limit: 115 pounds

Champ: Vacant

1. **MASAMORI TOKUYAMA** North Korea 28-2-1 (8)
2. **ALEXANDER MUNOZ** Venezuela 23-0 (23)
3. **FERNANDO MONTIEL** Mexico 25-0-1 (19)
4. **LUIS PEREZ** Nicaragua 21-1 (14)
5. **MARTIN CASTILLO** Mexico 23-1 (14)
6. **FELIX MACHADO** Venezuela 22-4-1 (11)
7. **MAURICIO PASTRANA** Colombia 29-3-1 (19)
8. **LUIS BOLANO** Colombia 38-0 (28)
9. **OSCAR ANDRADE** Mexico 29-22-1 (16)
10. **KATSUSHIGE KAWASHIMA** Japan 23-2 (16)

FLYWEIGHTS
Weight Limit: 112 pounds

Champ: Vacant

1. **ERIC MOREL** Madison, WI 32-0 (18)
2. **PONGSAKLEK WONJONGKAM** Thailand 46-2 (25)
3. **IRENE PACHECO** Colombia 27-0 (20)
4. **MZUKISI SIKALI** South Africa 27-4-2 (16)
5. **HAWK MAKEPULA** South Africa 20-2 (13)
6. **MALCOLM TUNACAO** Philippines 14-1-2 (10)
7. **PETER CULSHAW** England 23-1-1 (12)
8. **OMAR NARVAEZ** Argentina 13-0-1 (7)
9. **DAMAEN KELLY** Ireland 18-1 (8)
10. **LORENZO PARRA** Venezuela 19-0 (15)

JR. FLYWEIGHTS
Weight Limit: 108 pounds

Champ: ROSENDO ALVAREZ Nicaragua 32-2-1 (21)

1. **JORGE ARCE** Mexico 34-3-1 (25)
2. **BEBIS MENDOZA** Colombia 28-2 (23)
3. **PICHIT SIRIWAT** Thailand 26-2 (12)
4. **NELSON DIEPPA** Puerto Rico 19-2-2 (11)
5. **YOSAM CHOI** South Korea 24-2 (13)
6. **MELCHOR COB-CASTRO** Mexico 66-9-4 (30)
7. **JOSE VICTOR BURGOS** Mexico 36-13-2 (21)
8. **MHIKIZA MYEKENI** South Africa 17-1 (6)
9. **FAHLAN SAKKREERIN** Thailand 49-3-2 (19)
10. **KERMIN GUARDIA** Colombia 34-2 (21)

STRAWWEIGHTS
Weight Limit: 105 pounds

Champ: Vacant

1. **MIGUEL BARRERA** Colombia 20-0-2 (12)
2. **JOSE AGUIRRE** Mexico 29-1-1 (18)
3. **NOEL ARAMBULET** Venezuela 19-2-1 (10)
4. **CHANA PORPAOIN** Thailand 49-2-2 (17)
5. **KEITARO HOSHINO** Japan 23-9 (6)
6. **JOMA GAMBOA** Philippines 32-7-2 (22)
7. **ROBERTO LEYVA** Mexico 21-2-1 (18)
8. **DANIEL REYES** Colombia 29-1-1 (24)
9. **JUAN PALACIOS** Nicaragua 13-2 (9)
10. **ISAAC BUSTOS** Mexico 19-6-3 (9)

RYAN OUT LOUD

By Jeff Ryan

NO U-TURNS ALLOWED

The smartest thing we could all do is stop trying to analyze the thinking of Mr. Roy Jones. His mind, apparently, functions the same way that his hands do. He does everything on instinct and is constantly changing on the fly, and no matter how many times we see him at work, we don't gain one bit more understanding of how he does what he does. From loving/hating his old man to playing pro basketball on the day of a title defense to ducking a light heavyweight challenger he'd be heavily favored to beat to climbing up to heavyweight and bullying a guy who outweighed him by 33 pounds, Jones is forever mystifying the masses and then chuckling at their bewilderment.

Trying to forecast Jones' career path is like trying to predict which way a football is going to bounce after it's punted 60 yards and lands on its end. Jones is as all over the map as a house cat that has sprawled on a Rand McNally atlas left open on the coffee table. Would you have believed he'd so easily beat James Toney? Get decked by Lou Del Valle? Suffer his only career loss by DQ? Avenge it with a first-round knockout? Halt the never-before-kayoed Virgil Hill with a bodyshot? *Intimidate* John Ruiz? Or—here's a real tabletop curve ball that he's thrown us—stick around at heavyweight after the dust from "The Quiet Man's" powdered nose bone cleared?

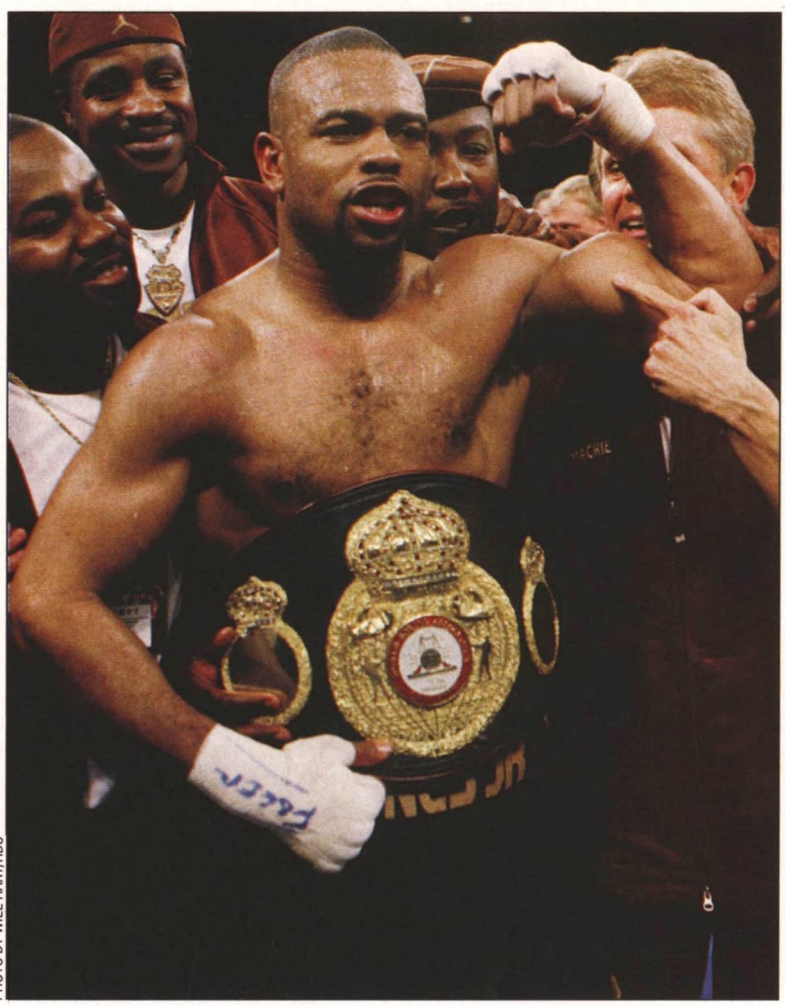


PHOTO BY WILL HART/HBO

Jones intends to keep the extra muscle and the heavyweight belt

That's right, when forced by the alphabets to make a decision in April, Jones elected to give up his WBA and WBC light heavyweight titles in order to keep the WBA heavyweight belt. A few days after that, Jones was talking about facing Evander Holyfield in the fall. (Of course, not content to have a superstar on their throne and an unusual and intriguing situation unfolding in front of them, the alphabet clowns in Venezuela already want to break balls and make Jones defend against Vitali Klitschko by the end of August. Jones, aware of the pay-per-view potential of a shootout with Holyfield, will likely tell the WBA to kiss off and will meet "The Real Deal" with no paper crown at stake if he has to.)

So much for the thoughts of many, myself included, that the usually safety-conscious Jones was going to keep his prefight

promise and follow the win over Ruiz with a retreat to the comfy confines of the 175-pound ranks, where defenses against the Antonio Tarvers and Mehdi Sahnounes could go on for a few more years.

Apparently, a funny thing happened on the way to the deposit window: Jones realized that a $10-million check is as equally healthy for the ego as it is for the bank account. As a light heavy, Jones was "Pound-For-Pound This" and "Undisputed That" for a long time and it didn't earn him anything near the payday he pocketed for beating one ordinary big man who possessed a paper title. At heavyweight, the potential opponents include future Hall of Famers, marquee superstars, and the owner of the most prestigious crown in the game. The *real* crown. At light heavy, there is only a bunch of overwhelming underdogs that HBO would have to profile the hell out of in order to pique more than mild viewing interest.

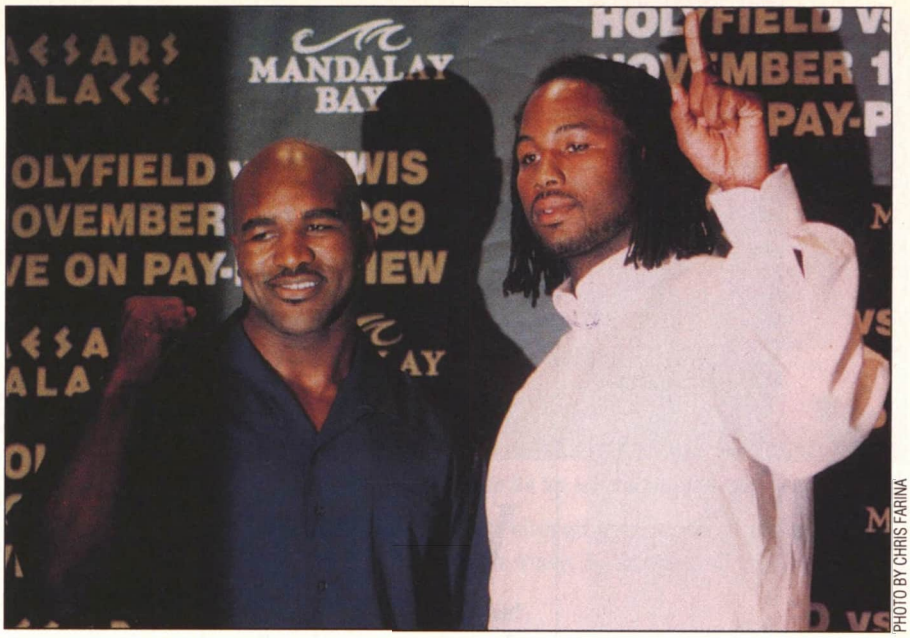


PHOTO BY CHRIS FARINA

If Roy gets by Holyfield, will he be forced into fighting Lewis?

That Jones would target Holyfield comes as little surprise. He had his eye on The Real Deal practically since that day a few years ago when Jones first talked about moving up to tangle with the big cats. If Jones thought Holyfield was beatable then, imagine what he thinks now that the ex-champ is 40 years old and 1-2-1 in his last four outings. Even though Holyfield still possesses power in both fists, has a reliable chin, and will display far more heart, fury, and strategy than Ruiz, Jones would likely emerge with an impressive victory. One that, simply because of the cache of the Holyfield name, will carry far more clout in the public's mind than it should.

And at that very moment, when he is basking in a new wave of adulation and telling a packed postfight press conference how he proved he could absorb the wallop of a great heavyweight, outthink one of the smartest fighters in the game, and retire a legend, Jones will have reached the point of no return.

He'll be in the same place Michael Spinks, the last light heavyweight king who launched a successful assault on the heavyweights, found himself on the night of June 15, 1987. On that evening in Atlantic City, Spinks blasted out Gerry Cooney in five rounds. What did it mean? It should have meant very little considering the difference in the two fighters' overall ability and experience against quality opposition. But the win was significant because 1) Spinks showed that he was now a big man, not merely a good small man who could outhustle an aging Larry Holmes and outclass a nobody like Steffan Tangstad. And 2) Spinks instantly became the most attractive rival for Mike Tyson, a champion starved for a fight against a fellow great.

Immediately after that bout, Spinks' promoter, Butch Lewis, announced that his next move would be to invite Team Tyson "to my table." One sensed that Tyson-Spinks was a matchup the Spinks camp was never, ever comfortable with, but one that *had* to be made. Once Spinks was a heavyweight on a winning streak, not merely a 175-pounder going for broke one night against Holmes, he couldn't avoid Tyson and still look at himself in the mirror every morning.

Jones will find himself in exactly the same situation come autumn. If he beats Holyfield, albeit a ringworn one, we'll know that Jones' heavyweight capabilities consist of more than embarrassing a glorified clubfighter like Ruiz. We'll know that Jones has become a legitimate big man, not simply a guy sticking his toe in the water. And the boxing world will consider him—in light of Tyson's lost aura of badness, Wladimir Klitschko's unexpected crash, and brother Vitali's failure to stir anyone's passion—the only interesting challenger for linear heavyweight king Lennox Lewis.

If Jones abandons the heavyweights from that point on, or handpicks himself a Joe Mesi here and a Frans Botha there, his credibility will be flushed down the toilet like a dead goldfish. And the perception of him will go from legend-in-the-making to sly opportunist. The time to turn back, to duck the best of the big men, would have been after beating Ruiz, when Jones could have still sold us on the argument that his move to heavyweight was just a one-shot experiment. After the Holyfield fight, though, we're going to start clamoring for a Jones-Lewis showdown, a matchup that, as recently as six months ago, would have seemed like a sacrificial offering.

And while, at this particular moment, your fearless prognosticator would have to pick Lewis if such a fight unfolded tomorrow, Jones has already put a few doubts in my mind. After all, even on his best night Lewis tends to take longer to launch his right hand than Saddam Hussein needed to fire his Scud missiles. Yes, Lewis' jab could poke a hole right through Jones' forehead—if that forehead was still in the same place it had been when the Briton first let the punch go. Could Lewis, who often moves like he's stepping in steaming tar, catch Jones repeatedly? And what if he couldn't? Let's remember that Lewis has never fought well when frustrated, and Jones is the master of frustration.

See how easy it is to start making a case for Jones? And he hasn't even beaten Holyfield yet. For his sake, Jones better start making that same case himself. For even if it turns out that he can't escape Lewis in the ring, nothing that unfolded would be as damaging as what would happen to Jones if he tried to avoid Lewis outside of it. ■

DIGGING DEEP

By Ivan Goldman

HOLY GASKET

What got into Larry Merchant? Now that Showtime's Jim Gray learned to civilize his approach, HBO's Merchant has sprung fangs and fur, out-nastying the bad old Gray by a mile. Anyone who saw Merchant confront middleweight champion Bernard Hopkins after his victory in eight rounds over the hapless, hopeless, WBC mandatory contender Morrade Hakkar of France knows what I'm talking about. Merchant's performance had all the taste and style of the flying squad of paparazzi that rushed actress Winona Ryder outside the courthouse and broke her arm.

"It looks like tonight you got paid for not doing very much," Merchant told Hopkins. Notice this was a statement, not a question, abandoning the very purpose of an interview, which is to elicit information. What we got instead was a series of insults and some truly ugly TV. Merchant pledged another Hopkins mismatch "won't happen again," presumably not on HBO. Hopkins took this as a threat. So did I.

Interviewers don't treat baseball or football players with such unbridled, on-camera loathing. Since when did fighters—who are generally more likable than other athletes—become chopped liver?

It's worth noting that we print guys have the luxury of time to think over our words and that broadcasters have no delete key. But at some point a man runs out of leeway. "Aren't you embarrassed by this?" growled Merchant.

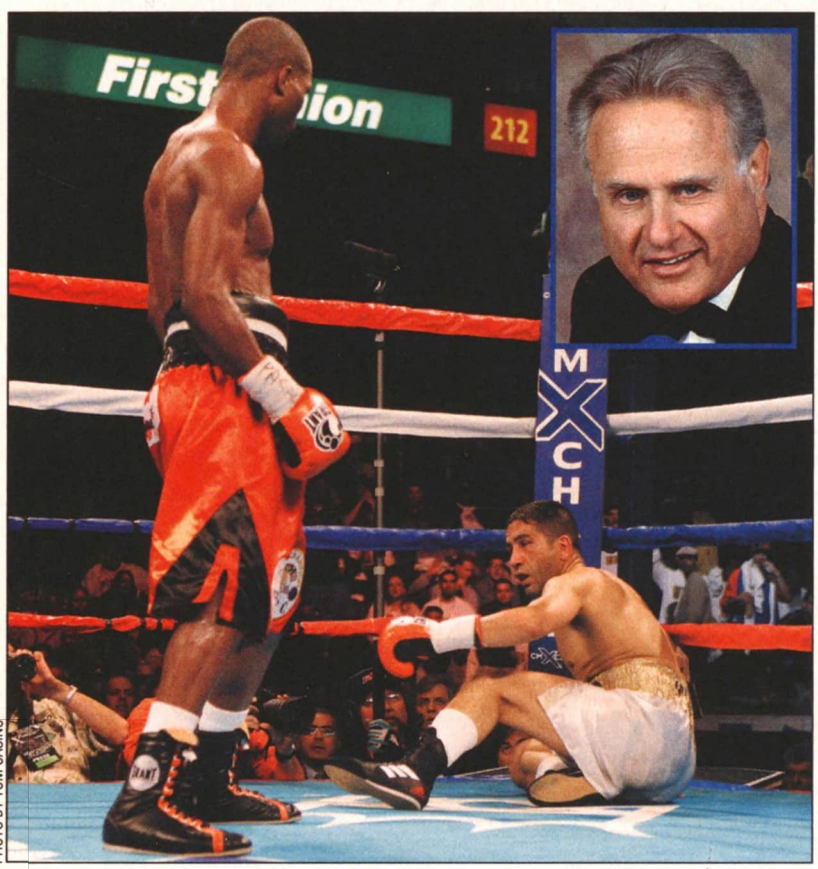


PHOTO BY TOM CASINO

HBO's Merchant (inset) went postal over Hopkins-Hakkar

Sure, it's frustrating to watch the self-managed Hopkins steer his career straight into an iceberg with his utterly goofy business decisions. But these are not crimes. I mean, this isn't Osama freaking bin Laden we're talking about here.

The difficult Hopkins is unloved by the HBO suits, which made it easier for Merchant to get away with interview murder. I don't recall such thundering rage after HBO franchise Oscar De La Hoya rolled over mandatory French pudding Patrick Charpentier.

When Larry calms down, he's a terrific analyst, on or off camera. Whenever I've called him with questions, he's been helpful and forthcoming with thoughtful answers. But his anger is getting the best of him. It's possible to be a charming grouch. It's impossible to be a charming bully.

After Hopkins walked away, Merchant's tirade hit the red zone. Hopkins, he said with undisguised malice, is "going downhill" and "ready to be taken."

"The way [Hopkins] looks tonight at 38 years old," he said, "I think all those junior middleweights ought to jump up and fight him because I think they can beat him."

Now I happen to believe De La Hoya, with his

lightning hook, would be no pushover for Hopkins. But to say that the bigger, stronger, brilliantly schooled, always-in-condition Hopkins would be easy prey for "The Golden Boy," Fernando Vargas, Shane Mosley, and Winky Wright is a distorted perception. They would be the first to admit it. Merchant allowed personal animosity to cloud his judgment.

George Foreman remained cool as he reminded everyone that Hopkins has proved himself the best middleweight out there. Ironically, it's Big George who's often accused of being unprofessional. Both he and Jim Lampley did a commendable job of trying to clean up Merchant's mess.

"POCKET ROCKET" SLAMS TO EARTH: Watching Scott "The Real McCoy" Harrison repeatedly hammer Wayne McCullough in the head with clean, thundering shots must be what it was like to witness a torture session by the Iraqi secret police. From the very start, The Pocket Rocket was never in the fight. Harrison was too big, too strong, too young, too everything.

McCullough, really a junior feather, tempted fate once too often by going after yet another world-class, full-fledged featherweight. Ironically, the manager who arranged it for him was his wife, Cheryl McCullough. Appropriately, she watched the massacre sitting beside manager Teresa Tapia, who last year stuck her own husband, Johnny Tapia, into the ring with Marco Antonio Barrera, arguably the best fighter in the world.

Barrera took it easy on the rusted hulk that is now Tapia. Scotland's Harrison, who cannot be faulted for it, pounded McCullough full force until the bell ended the 12th round.

By that time, McCullough's head looked like a Salvador Dali still life of a badly bruised tropical fruit with a hideously swollen ear sticking out of it. McCullough doesn't have the kind of punch that could turn a fight around in the later rounds. What purpose did it serve to leave him in there staggering around the ring like a wounded stallion?

Serious Magoos go to the entire frozen cast of do-nothing characters. That would include Cheryl McCullough, trainer Kenny Croom, referee John Coyle, and the British commission.

The savage bout was frighteningly reminiscent of Nigel Benn's tragic destruction of Gerald McClellan in 1995. That terrible night was also supervised by the British commission, which sent a blind, crippled McClellan back to Freeport, Illinois.

PHOTO BY TOM CASINO/SHOWTIME

McCullough absorbed way too much against Harrison

PHOTO BY TOM CASINO/SHOWTIME

Will Hatton be able to handle the top junior welters the way he did Phillips?

Like McClellan, McCullough also ended up in the hospital. Fortunately, he walked out whole, no thanks to all those people who let him down.

A SCOT FOR REAL: Harrison made defeating McCullough look easy. It isn't. Erik Morales, who rules 126 with Mexican countryman Barrera, had a much harder time with The Pocket Rocket. Yes, yes, analysts repeatedly remind us that styles make fights. And yes, Harrison might have trouble with a mover. But that pasting in Glasgow made me a true believer.

The dream opponent for Harrison is brooding Naseem Hamed. But The Prince may see the emergence of this tough, young British featherweight as yet another reason to lay low for the rest of this century. Naz may have already made a stealth exit from the sport, much like Marvelous Marvin Hagler did in 1987.

Fellow-Briton Ricky Hatton is attracting plenty of attention. But as a junior welter, he faces a certified murderers' row of contenders in Vivian Harris, Miguel Cotto, Zab Judah, Sharmba Mitchell, and Muhammad Abdullaev. And that's before he gets to world champion Kostya Tszyu! Did I miss anybody? Probably. This division sprouts talent faster than you can say "stop ducking each other, already."

On the other hand, the 25-year-old Harrison, could, with a bit of luck, plenty of good gym work, and the right kind of positioning, end up with the featherweight crown. The real one.

FREE FIGHTS: The optimists were right. I was wrong. Over-the-air-network NBC decided to dip its toe back into the boxing waters after all, starting with Rocky Juarez vs. Frank Archuleta on utterly free TV. No need to call up and order it, no need for cable, dish, or contraband black box.

Compare this to Forum Boxing's demand for pay-per-view tribute to see featherweight champion Barrera lay waste to broadcaster and one-time fighter Kevin Kelley. The geriatric beating that followed, lasting all of four rounds, was a re-enactment of that scene in the old gangster movie in which Richard Widmark shoves an old, wheelchair-bound lady down a flight of stairs.

Unfortunately, promoters have this theory that any bout featuring at least one Hispanic with a pulse presents an opportunity to squeeze extra cash from viewers.

Welcome back, NBC. Pull up a chair. Stick around. Whatever beer you're advertising between rounds, send them over and keep them coming. ■

ROUND ONE FITNESS CENTER

IF YOU GO

Location: 201 Ritchie Road, Capital Heights, MD 20743-3629. Phone: 301-324-9835. Ask for Adrian Davis, Brenda Davis, Victor Davis, or Andrew Hawkins.

Directions: Take exit 15B off the Capital Beltway (495). Less than a mile off the exit, take a left on Ritchie Road, where the gym will be two blocks down on the right.

Membership: Standard monthly dues are $80. Personal instruction extra. Open 9 a.m.-9 p.m. Monday through Friday, and 9 a.m.-2 p.m. on Saturday. Closed on Sunday.

Who to look out for: There is an assortment of beltholders and former titlists who train at Round One. On any given day, the fighters working out could vary from current middleweight titlist William Joppy, to former flyweight and junior bantam beltholder Mark "Too Sharp" Johnson, to 2000 Olympian Clarence Vinson, to junior welterweight contenders DeMarcus "Chop Chop" Corley and Teddy Reid.

Advice to greenhorns: Get there early if you want to see world-champion caliber fighters such as Joppy and Johnson. Most pro fighters are always approachable, but it's best to get them after they're finished working out. If you plan to work out, the best times would be in the afternoons when it's less hectic.

Top fighters like "Too Sharp" Johnson work out early

Text by Johnnie Whitehead
Photos by Mike Greenhill

Adrian Davis has been here, there, and everywhere when it comes to boxing gyms.

Shortly after retiring from fighting in 1972 because of multiple holes in his retina that required three surgeries, Davis went from teaching boxing at a Bowie, Maryland, community center to running his own gym, Round One Fitness Center, which is probably the most recognizable and visited boxing facility in the Washington, D.C., metro area.

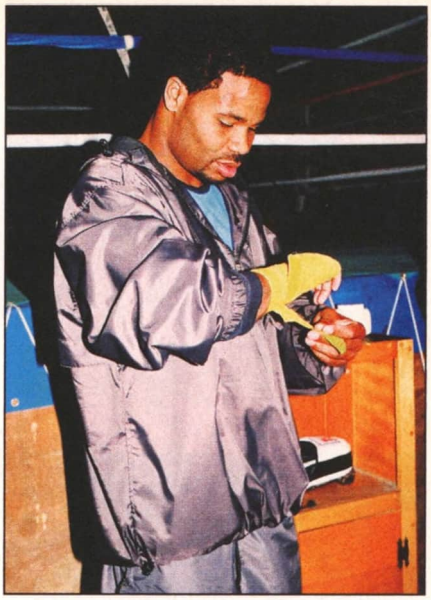
"The program got so big, they put me out," said the 59-year-old Davis of the community center he once occupied. "I've lost gyms, I've been evicted, and lost all my equipment. I even trained kids in my yard and garage."

Round One has had as many as five different locations, but finally it has a stable home in Capital Heights—in a suburban industrial area near Fed Ex Field, where the NFL's Washington Redskins play—for the past 4½ years. It's not an obscure and dank gathering place, like a lot of old-school boxing gyms. In fact, it has been

Adrian Davis and his wife, Beatrice, devote as much time to amateurs as seasoned pros

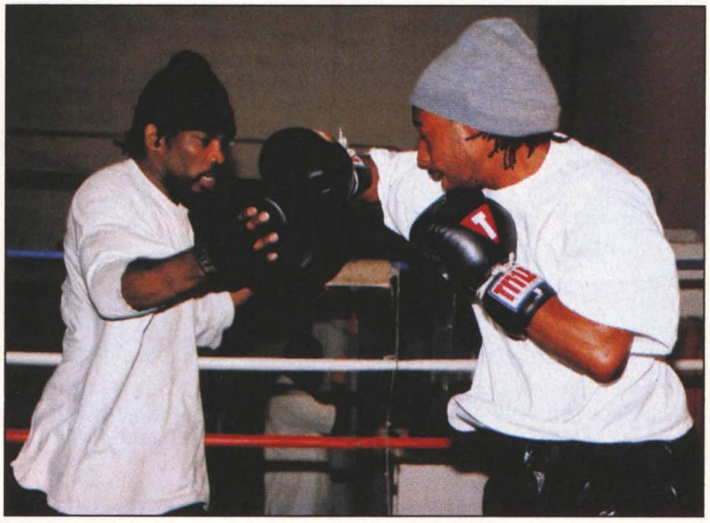
Round One has found a home (for now) in Capital Heights

Round One is a spacious gym with two full-sized rings



WBA middleweight titlist William Joppy tapes his hands

Father and son work the pads at Round One



There's never a shortage of workout partners at Round One

referred to as the "celebrity gym" because of the names that stop by and the luxury cars they park outside, and also because it has the spaciousness of a penthouse (two full-sized rings). Even so, Davis' doors are open for all, not just fighters.

"If you try to just hold your gym for boxers, you'll starve for sure," said Davis, whose wife, Beatrice, suggested the gym's name.

The world-class caliber fighters who have trained at Round One over the years include William Joppy, Robert Daniels, Sharmba Mitchell, Mark Johnson, Simon Brown, and former heavyweight champion Hasim Rahman.

When fighters who train at other area gyms are looking for serious sparring, they frequently pack their bags and head to Round One. Where else could you find two-division former titleholder "Too Sharp" Johnson going rounds with bantamweight prospect Clarence Vinson, or WBA middleweight titlist Joppy trading bombs with junior welterweight puncher Teddy Reid?

But it's not all well-known boxers at Round One. Davis has kids as young as age four and spends as much time working with amateurs and taking them to tournaments as he does working with professionals. He estimates he attended more than 100 fight cards in '02.

Davis' 53 pro fights in 17 years as a journeyman welterweight have been assets that have helped him as a trainer and with the everyday operations of a gym. One might think that he finds satisfaction in living vicariously through the accomplishments of his fighters, but Davis doesn't see it that way. He is not a chest-thumping self-promoter. Despite his track record, he is curiously humble considering his success as a teacher, and he is reluctant to put himself on a pedestal.

"I've made a lot of champions, but I never made it myself," Davis said. "It's always bothered me. Nobody looked out for me."

With Davis in their corner, that's one thing the fighters who train at Round One will never have to worry about. ■

CAMERA CLICKS

PHOTO BY MARTY ROSENGARTEN

Watch out Larry and George—it looks like Jim Lampley's found a couple of friends he might prefer working with. Lamps recently took a moment to pose with a pair of round-card girls who also happen to be models for Perfect 10, *the magazine that claims its talent is all 100 percent natural.*

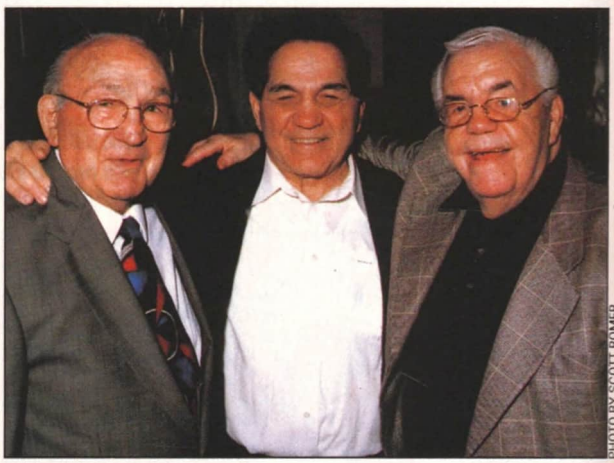


PHOTO BY SCOTT ROMER

It was 48 years ago that Carmen Basilio and Tony DeMarco went to war in 1955's Fight of the Year—and Lou Duva, believe it or not, was already receiving Social Security benefits at the time. Now close to 200 years old, Duva was glad to pose with the seventy-something whippersnappers at a recent gathering.

PHOTO BY SCOTT ROMER

Macho men: Two of the toughest guys around, grizzled pro wrestling vet Randy "Macho Man" Savage and former lightweight titlist Ray "Boom Boom" Mancini, met up recently. Despite losing a controversial decision against Hector "Macho" Camacho years ago, Mancini doesn't appear to harbor any resentment toward people who share the "Macho" nickname.

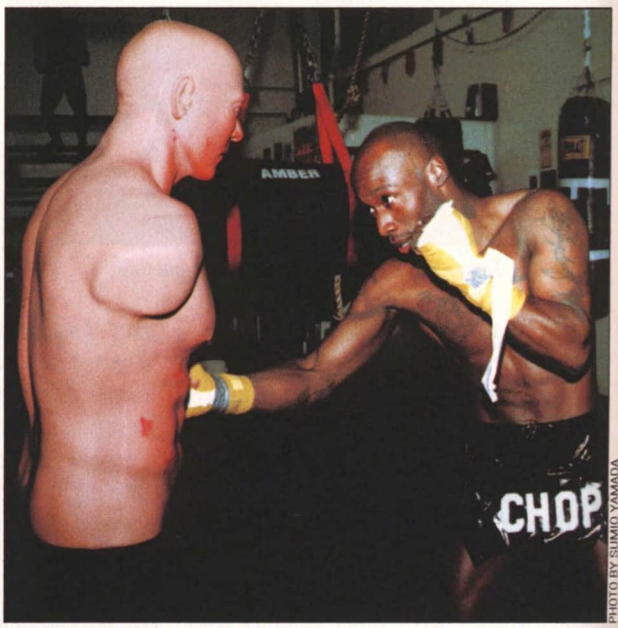


PHOTO BY SUMIO YAMADA

"Geez, Randall Bailey offered more resistance than this." DeMarcus "Chop Chop" Corley gets in his licks on the ultimate no-risk opponent—one with no arms and no legs—during a recent gym session. Certainly, Chop will be in for a tougher fight when he takes on a fighter with two arms and two legs (though arguably one less chin than this dummy), Zab Judah, in a bout tentatively set for July.

PHOTOS BY CONNIE GOLDMAN

THE RING's West Coast correspondent, Ivan Goldman (inset), took a trip way to the east recently, stopping in Ireland to see the monument in Curragh of Kildare where legendary Irish fighter Dan Donnelly knocked out George Cooper in 1815. The field has since been known as Donnelly's Hollow, and still intact are the holes in the ground created when Donnelly's fans dug up the impressions of his feet as he strode up the hill after the fight.

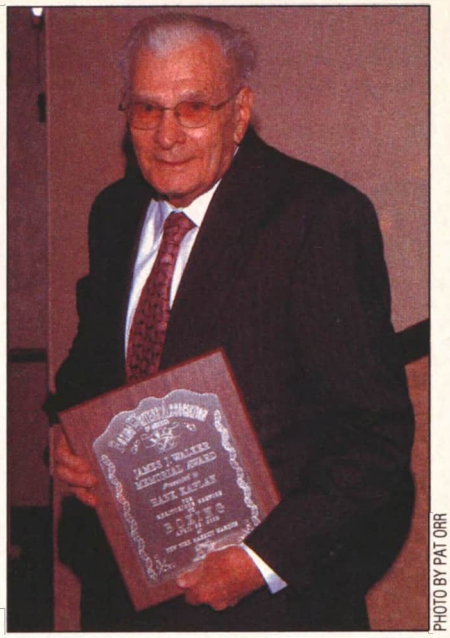


PHOTO BY PAT ORR

No, this isn't the co-winner of the 2002 Fighter of the Year award. Boxing historian Hank Kaplan took home the James J. Walker Award for long and meritorious service to boxing at the recent Boxing Writers Association of America dinner, an honor well deserved.

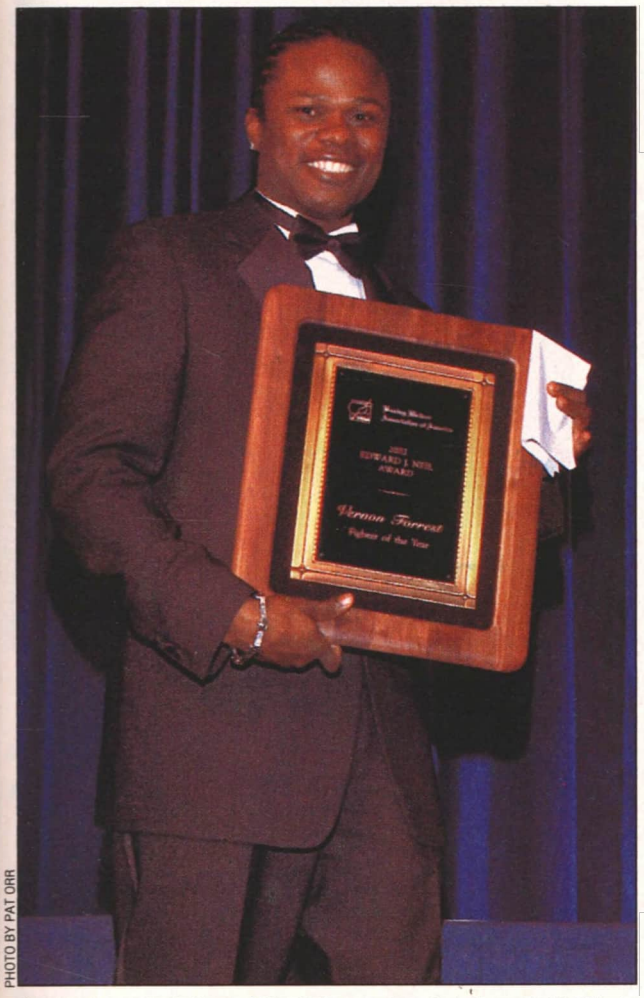
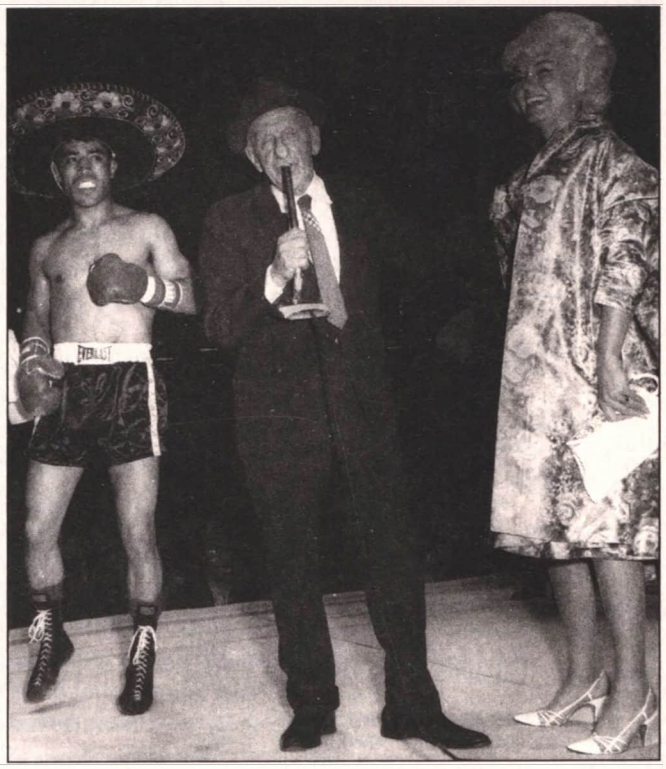


PHOTO BY PAT ORR

He may have lost his undefeated record and welterweight title to Ricardo Mayorga in January, but Vernon Forrest didn't lose his smile. He also didn't lose credit for what he accomplished the previous year, and here he is at the Boxing Writers Association of America dinner, accepting the Edward J. Neil Award given to the Fighter of the Year.

NOSTALGIA CORNER



When Mexican sensation Ricardo Moreno used to fight, it was always a good idea to have alternative entertainment ready, since all but three of Moreno's 73 fights ended inside the distance. In this particular case, singers Jimmy Durante and Jane Morgan took to the microphone, creating a scene quite a bit different from the current trend of rappers accompanying fighters to the ring. To learn more about Moreno, check out the soon-to-be-released 180-page special issue of THE RING ranking the 100 Greatest Punchers Of All-Time.

NEW FACES

STEVE MOLITOR

Bantamweight

By Paul Salgado

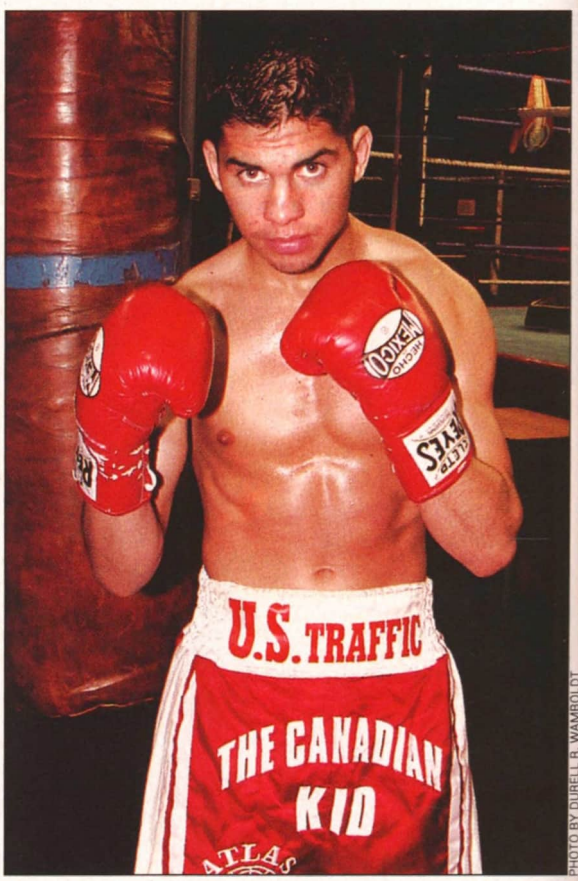


PHOTO BY DURELL R. WAMBOLDT

If there is one thing that Steve Molitor is certain of now, it is that the trajectory of a person's life can change irreversibly in the splinter of a moment. It was a truism he understood inside the prize ring; that choices made in milliseconds amid the passion of competition ultimately determine the outcome. But he had never grafted the metaphor to the larger picture of life until last May, when he sat in numbed disbelief in a Sarnia, Ontario, courtroom and watched as his older brother, Jeremy, stood accused of the brutal murder of his ex-girlfriend, Jessica Nethery. As a trial date was set, Jeremy would barely hazard a glance in the direction of his younger brother Steve and their distraught parents, Linda and Mike.

Days before, a blood-covered Jeremy, who had been imposed by a restraining order not to associate with Jessica, had surrendered to police after a brief standoff. Not long after, the body of Jessica was found inside her car in a downtown parking garage, dead from apparent stab wounds.

Jeremy has been charged with first-degree murder and is expected to go to trial in early-2004. It was not clear as of press time how Jeremy would plead. In Canada, first-degree murder carries a life sentence, with a mandatory minimum 25 years served before being considered for parole.

To this day, only Jeremy knows what led to the horrifying events of that spring morning. For Steve, there are no answers, just endless, agonizing questions. The specter of Jeremy's incarceration has been impossible to reconcile.

Like most younger brothers, Steve's vision of his older brother had been one of almost epic heroism. It had been Jeremy who inspired Steve to take up boxing at the age of nine after Jeremy had won the first of what would eventually be 10 amateur national titles. Inside the gym, it had been Jeremy who would implore his younger brother to run extra miles and spar more rounds. It was a relationship grounded in mutual support and sibling rivalry.

"Every time we got into the ring he was trying to prove that he was my big brother, and I was

(Continued on page 90)

PRO RECORD

2000		
May 18	Julio Luna, Winnipeg, Manitoba	W 8
July 29	Mark McQueen, Detroit, MI	KO 3
Aug. 16	Thierry Naulleau, Montreal, Quebec	KO 2
Sept. 8	Joel Lopez, Montreal	W 4
Sept. 28	Shane Langford, Winnipeg	W 6
Nov. 3	Jason Adams, Montreal	W 4
Dec. 15	Steve Trumble, Montreal	W 6
2001		
Jan. 19	Shane Langford, Toronto, Ontario	W 4
April 4	Silvio Luzon, Toronto	W 12
2002		
Feb. 15	Scotty Olson, Edmonton, Alberta	KO 5
April 10	Teofilo Manzueta, Toronto	KO 3
June 21	Jose DeJesus Lopez, Mississauga, Ontario	W 10
Sept. 21	Nicky Booth, Essex, England	W 12
2003		
March 7	Vicente Luis Burgo, Niagara Falls, Ontario	KO 4
April 25	Julio Coronel, Albuquerque, NM	W 10

FIGHTS	WON	LOST	DRAW	KOs
15	15	0	0	5

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PAZIENZA/ROSENBLATT • DELAHOYA/RUELAS • TYSON/HOLYFIELD
HOLYFIELD/TYSON II • CHAVEZ/DELAHOYA • OSCAR DELAHOYA
DELAHOYA/CHAVEZ II • TYSON/RUDDOCK II • JONES/PAZIENZA
CHAVEZ/GAMACHE • MOORER/FOREMAN • DURAN/CAMACHO • F. TRINIDAD
JONES/GONZALEZ • DELAHOYA/CARR • F. MAYWEATHER/RIOS • R. DURAN
DELAHOYA/RIVERA • IRON MIKE TYSON • DELAHOYA/TRINIDAD
DELAHOYA/MOSLEY • DELAHOYA/QUARTEY • DELAHOYA/CHARPENTIER
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Although De La Hoya's seventh-round TKO of Campas was little more than target practice, it drew a capacity crowd to the Mandalay Bay in Las Vegas and also sold surprisingly well on pay-per-view. The event served as a perfect tune-up for "The Golden Boy's" upcoming rematch with Shane Mosley.

OSCAR at 30

Forget About Retirement ... He Has Revenge On His Mind

By Joe Santoliquito

PHOTOS BY WILL HART/HBO

Movie star looks. Beautiful wife. Million-dollar smile. Magic name that generates sellout crowds. Crossover appeal that makes pay-per-view mismatches huge money-makers. Maybe life does begin at 30, because life certainly couldn't be more perfect for Oscar De La Hoya than it is right now.

Still, "The Golden Boy" often said he didn't want to fight past 30. But guess what: He turned 30 on February 4, 2003, so he's clearly reconsidered his timetable.

This time in De La Hoya's life was originally earmarked for changing diapers, approving movie scripts, and mining the amateur ranks for the next great crossover star for his Golden Boy promotional company. But De La Hoya is still fighting, more popular now than he's ever been.

"If I was undefeated today, I would definitely be retired from boxing already," De La Hoya told THE RING a few days after his seventh-round TKO of Yory Boy Campas. "Those two losses [to Felix Trinidad and Shane Mosley] have really got under my skin. I have to get revenge. It's something that always gets my blood boiling. It really ticks me off that I have those losses. I have to get those losses avenged."

Actually, there's no reason De La Hoya should stick to the original script. He's at the pinnacle of his powers, with everything going his way on both sides of the ropes. Besides being happily married to singing star Millie Corretjer, he has discovered a newfound confidence working with trainer Floyd Mayweather Sr.

"I would say this is the happiest I've ever been in my career," De La Hoya said. "Ever since meeting my wife and everything that's been going on recently in my career, all the planets are aligned for me. I'm doing something that I love and I'm sharing it with my wife, so it doesn't get any better than that."

Bob Arum, who has promoted De La Hoya throughout most of his pro career, agrees.

"Oscar couldn't be happier than he is right now," said Arum. "He's matured and his philosophy on life is a lot different. He has a wonderful wife, his boxing has improved under Mayweather, and all of these things coming together have made him very happy. I've known Oscar since 1992, and I have never seen him as he is now. Contentment seems to be in his skin."

Even so, the two blemishes on his otherwise pristine record gnaw at De La Hoya every day. Sure, he can create a stampede of women with the wink of an eye, but probe deep inside the handsome exterior and you'll find the instincts of a fighter at the core of De La Hoya's being. He won't feel completely satisfied until those losses are rectified.

While cynics might snicker at the notion, the Campas fight was more than an easy way to pick up approximately $11-million. De La Hoya didn't want to go into his rematch with Mosley encased in rust.

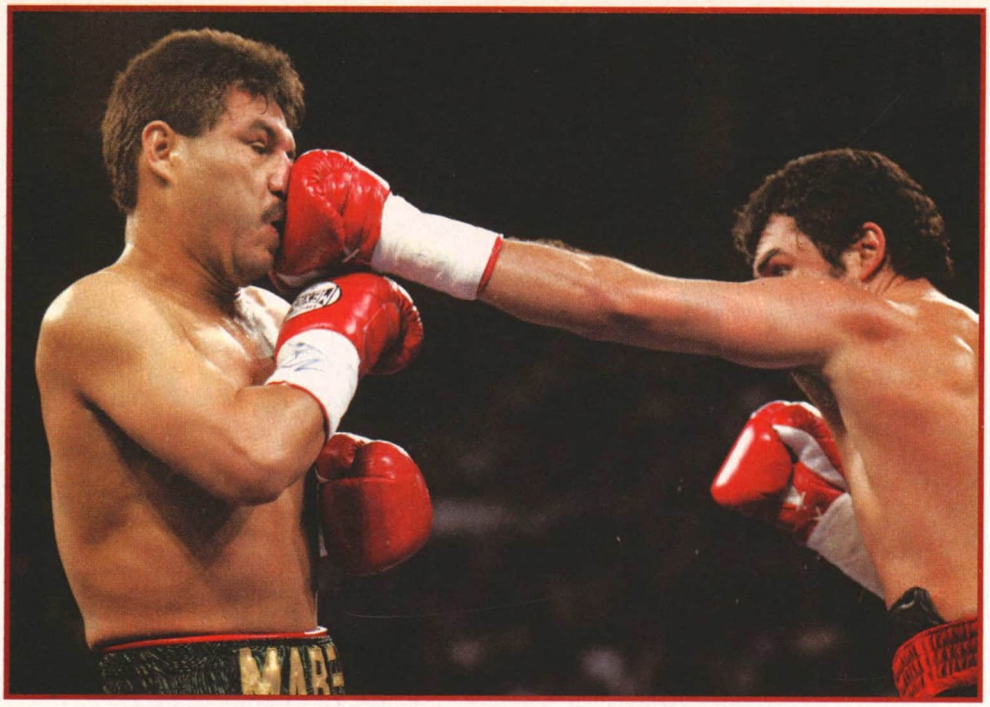
"I don't like to call fights tune-ups, so I'll say the Campas fight was a great workout for me," said De La Hoya, who stopped the former IBF junior middleweight titleholder at the 2:45 mark of the seventh round in the initial defense of the world junior middleweight championship. "I'm going back in the gym next week. I've never done that before. In the beginning of my career, I'd take off maybe a month, but I'm 30 now; I need to take care of myself more and I'll be in the best shape of my life when I face Mosley again."

Mayweather has been a big part of De La Hoya's newfound confidence and renewed commitment.

"Before, there were insecurities under previous trainers. I always had some doubts whether I had enough reserve left in the tank and if I could win on talent alone," De La Hoya explained. "Now all of those questions are answered with Mayweather. I can go late into a fight knowing I have reserves. I can throw combinations and knock my opponent out. I am confident, more confident than I've ever been."

Under Mayweather's guidance, De La Hoya is fighting more confidently than he ever has. In the Campas fight, he displayed a dangerous and sneaky lead right hand, accurate combination punching, and finished off his combos with crisp uppercuts.

None of that, of course, is surprising; De La Hoya was expected to dominate. What did raise eyebrows was how financially successful the promotion turned out to be. It's one thing for De La Hoya to do big numbers when facing a competitive opponent such as Mosley or Trinidad, but another thing all together when he can snare such a large audience for what everybody knew was a mismatch. There were more than 11,000 adoring fans filling the



De La Hoya's game has risen to a new level under the tutelage of trainer Floyd Mayweather Sr. Against Campas, he made excellent use of his jab, scoring cleanly to both head (above) and body (below).

Mandalay Bay Events Center for the Campas fight, and the pay-per-view was sold to approximately 350,000 homes at $49.95 a pop. Those are remarkable figures for what amounted to a gimme, and a perfect illustration of what De La Hoya means to the sport.

"I don't think it's anything anyone can pull off right now, besides De La Hoya," said HBO analyst Larry Merchant. "His victory over Fernando Vargas basically showed a lot of doubters that De La Hoya is committed to fighting, even despite the vast riches that he has stored. It also showed his ability to perform spectacularly in a big event. It's something he hadn't done before.

"He's essentially cut out the tongues of all of his critics, especially in the Mexican and Mexican-American communities. Or he's added them to his fan base. In a sense, he's as big or bigger than ever. We've seen him mature from a boy to a young man and go through the kind of difficulties that all good fighters go through, and come out standing."

The truth is that boxing needs De La Hoya right now more than De La Hoya needs boxing. He is scheduled to sign a two-fight extension with HBO after his September 13 rematch with Mosley, a contract that should take him through 2004. But will he, like so many others, be tempted to keep going beyond that point?

"I'm not sure yet how much longer I want to box, so I'm taking it a fight at a time and focusing on Shane Mosley in September, and after that we'll see," De La Hoya said. "I see the stories on TV of all these tragedies about these old fighters and that's something that's concerned me. Besides, my body is not feeling the same as it used to. I'm getting injured more often during training, which is something that hasn't happened to me before. I don't want to wind up like those other fighters, but knowing when to walk away is a tough decision to make."

It seems almost impossible that De La Hoya, of all people, could end up physically and mentally impaired. But despite seeming to lead a charmed life, he's still human, subject to the same rules of nature as every other boxer.

"I *know* Oscar De La Hoya and that won't happen, because Oscar's too smart to let that happen," Arum said emphatically. "I don't think Oscar should be doing this beyond the end of next year. I basically told him to take three more fights and then get out. That's my goal for him. Boxing is a very dangerous sport, and as you get older, it gets more dangerous. I don't want for Oscar to sound like Meldrick Taylor did in that HBO show.

"Unlike some of these other fighters, he has smart and caring people around him. We're going to be reinforcing the lesson not to go back. I don't think it will be a struggle for him to quit. He has a productive life after boxing, and I for one want to see him lead that kind of life. That's all I'm concerned about. If the sport ended tomorrow because Oscar left, I would still be in favor of Oscar leaving. But from the point

Campas, who fell to 80-6 (68), wasn't a total punching bag. He banged home some hard bodyshots, put a few red marks on Oscar's pretty face, and generally gave De La Hoya the kind of workout he needed.

of view of the sport, it would be good to have him around for a few more years."

Currently, the grand scheme calls for a victory over Mosley, which would hopefully induce Trinidad out of retirement and into a rematch. De La Hoya might also eventually move up to challenge middleweight champion Bernard Hopkins, but that would be less likely if he could beat both Mosley and Trinidad.

"That might be it for me," De La Hoya said. "I know it's part of the process that in boxing, opponents keep on popping up one after another, like Floyd Mayweather Jr. wants to fight me and Winky Wright wants to fight me. There are always opponents popping up. But for me, I want to avenge the two losses, then that's it. The only thing that's fueling me now is to get revenge. I don't know if I'll have the motivation or desire to fight beyond that."

De La Hoya, 36-2 (28), has been in the spotlight now for more than a decade, but nobody has come along yet who seems even remotely capable of filling his role once he retires.

De La Hoya cracks Campas with a right to the chin as their bout draws to a close. Although he was never off his feet, the veteran's corner threw in the towel in the seventh, forcing referee Vic Drakulich to call a halt at the 2:45 mark of the round.

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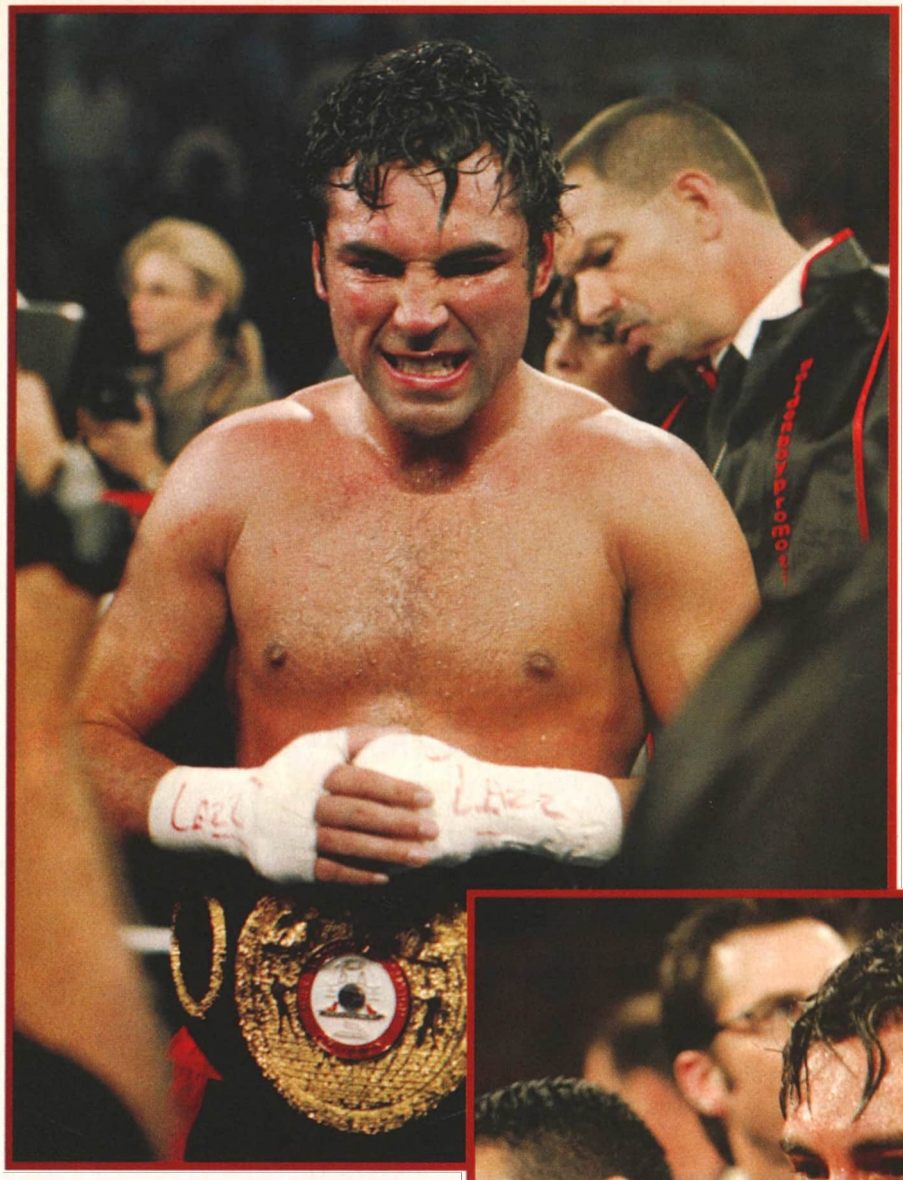

De La Hoya winces as he tests his left hand after the gloves were removed (above), but was wearing his famous smile by the time HBO conducted its postfight interview (right). Although the hand was injured, it wasn't considered serious enough to affect the Mosley fight in September, in Las Vegas.

"It's definitely going have an impact on the sport when I do retire," De La Hoya said. "The casual fan really doesn't know about boxing, and if they just follow me, they will shy away from it. But boxing will never die. It's always going to be there, and that's why I started Golden Boy Promotions, to help it along.

"It's a huge advantage to be where I am. We can get big corporations involved, we can approach executives of major companies about sponsorship. Little by little, we can get fans back by building fighters. That's my goal, but I don't actually see the next superstar coming along real fast, either. I don't see it anytime soon. So what we have to do now is continue putting on good fights with EPSN and HBO and see if a diamond in the rough comes out from somewhere. That's why I'm crossing my fingers that the NBC deal really works, because we need superstars to carry the sport and we need that exposure for young fighters."

"Boxing will survive," Arum said. "Who knows, another Oscar De La Hoya can emerge, or some kind of mutant form of Oscar De La Hoya will come along. There's no doubt in my mind. There will be another, whose star will burn bigger than Oscar's, but maybe not in my lifetime. There's some kid out there with some type of charisma that will make the fans focus on him. It's going to happen—always has and always will."

But De La Hoya isn't done yet, so let's appreciate him while we can. At the very least we've got the Mosley rematch to look forward to, and considering how happy and contented he is right now, maybe a whole lot more. ■

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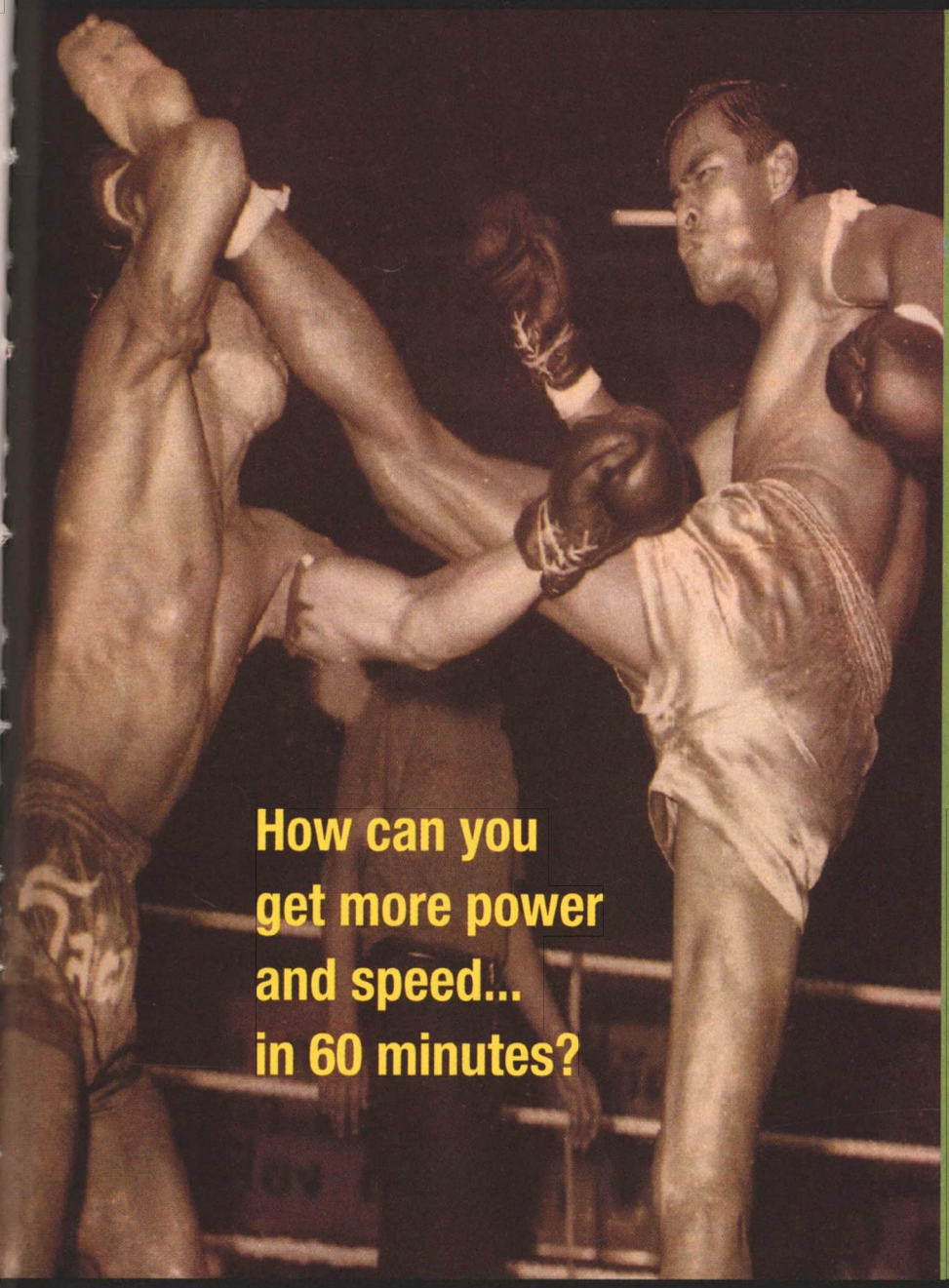

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WAS MAYORGA-FORREST A FLUKE?

20 Experts Analyze The Rematch

Compiled by Joe Santoliquito

Ricardo Mayorga lived and breathed Vernon Forrest in the days leading up to their world welterweight title fight in Temecula, California, in late-January. Within the first few minutes of the opening round, it showed, as the free-wheelin', punch-slingin' Nicaraguan swarmed all over Forrest. The defending champion had no choice but to step to Mayorga and engage in a slugfest. Though it was fun to watch, the result was anything but fun for Forrest, who was left reeling and dazed on the canvas, wondering what happened.

Many experts are still trying to figure out if Mayorga is really that good. He knocked Forrest down twice and came away as the welterweight champion of the world. To some, however, Mayorga's third-round stoppage of the previously undefeated Forrest wasn't convincing enough. "El Matador" still has more work to do if he's going to gain the complete respect from boxing's intelligentsia as the best 147-pounder in the world.

It's a rematch packed with possibilities and questions. Can Mayorga lure Forrest into another brawl? How will Forrest keep Mayorga off of him? Was Mayorga just lucky the first time? What happens if Forrest takes Mayorga into the late rounds?

On July 12, at the Orleans casino in Las Vegas, those questions and then some should be answered. But THE RING thought it would get a jump on what might actually happen by polling 20 experts as to what they believe will occur when Mayorga and Forrest face off again.

PHOTO BY DUANE LONG

PHOTO BY FRANK VITUCCI

RAY LEONARD (*promoter/ former world welterweight champion*): "The first fight was a major upset. When you take opponents lightly, those things happen. Vernon may have been overconfident from his two victories over Shane Mosley. I see Vernon being more like I was versus Duran in our rematch, being smarter and using his physical attributes to beat him. Vernon has to execute those things. When I lost to Duran, I lost a very close decision. Duran beat me mentally. Saying that, that edge goes to Mayorga. But Vernon has incredible talent, speed, all the physical attributes. I see him winning, possibly by knockout."

CAMERON DUNKIN (*manager of welterweights Antonio Diaz and Anthony Thompson*): "If Vernon Forrest boxes, he wins the fight. Everyone thinks Vernon made a mistake trying to knock the guy out the first fight. Forrest can make changes, but Mayorga can't do anything different to evolve. Ronnie Shields is a smart trainer and he'll correct the mistakes Vernon made. Vernon may not have respected Mayorga the first time. That won't happen again. I can see Vernon stopping Mayorga late."

JIM LAMPLEY (*HBO blow-by-blow announcer*): "When Shane Mosley made the mistake of coming back to a rematch immediately against Vernon, his confidence was shattering after having taken a beating over 12 rounds. But I'm sure Vernon's confidence is not badly damaged, because he wasn't in there very long against Mayorga. Vernon can legitimately say to himself, 'I was stupid, I fought the wrong fight.' I firmly believe that Forrest could outbox Mayorga. I pick Vernon Forrest, but with caution. The first fight was a case of Vernon setting the table for Mayorga to eat the meal. This time, Vernon wins by cautious decision."

ARTURO GATTI (*junior welterweight contender*): "It was a disgrace to see Mayorga light a cigarette in the ring right after beating a great champion like Vernon Forrest. Mayorga was very disrespectful toward Vernon, and not just to him, but to all of the guys who have worked very hard to be champion. Mayorga made it look easy to be a world champion, that you can smoke and drink to be a champion. It was a bad example to little kids. I have a lot of faith in Ronnie Shields and Vernon Forrest. They'll come with a different game plan to beat Mayorga. Vernon will come back and get his title back. Mayorga got lucky. Vernon will box him every round, and if Mayorga smokes two packs a day, he won't have the stamina to last."

PHOTO BY HOLLY STEIN/HBO

Most experts agree that Forrest will be more wary of Mayorga's wild swings and punching power in the rematch. Those factors will force Forrest to take a more cautious approach when Mayorga gets near.

DAN RAFAEL (***USA Today** boxing writer*): "A lot of it depends on the type of fight Forrest is willing to make. Mayorga fights one way and that's not going to change: He's going to come at you and try to knock you out. Vernon can't get caught up again in the same sort of fight that he did the first time, wanting to try to prove he can brawl. If Vernon boxes smart, he wins a decision. But I say that with a caveat, because Vernon could get caught again."

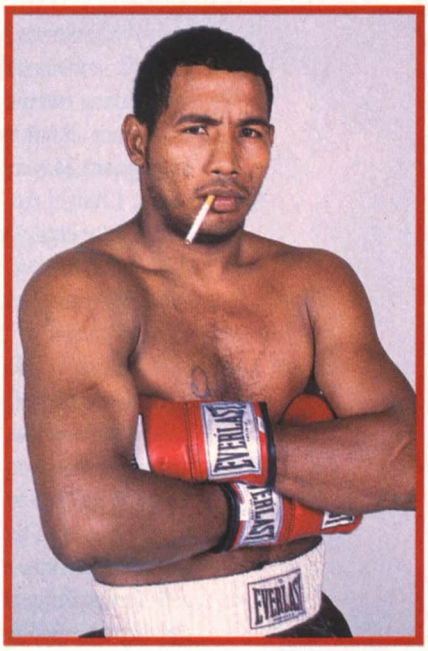
VICTOR BAGUE (*producer for Telefutura **Solo Boxeo***): "I think it could be the same result, only a little longer. Mayorga showed his courage and that he has the power to knock out Forrest. Maybe Forrest will have a little more respect for Mayorga's power. He may go to boxing a little more; it won't change the outcome. Mayorga will knock Forrest out again. It may go around seven or eight rounds this time."

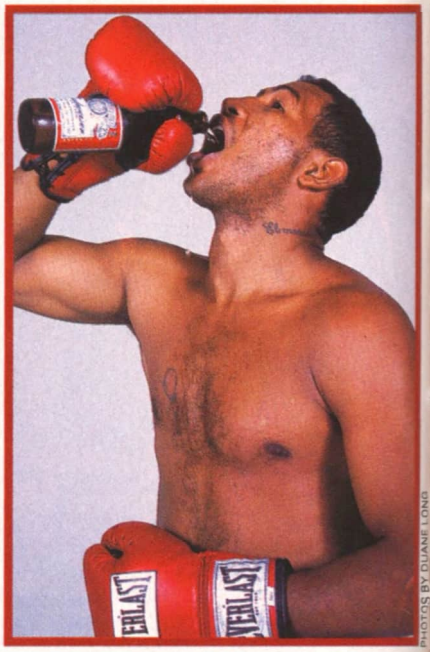
TIM SMITH (***New York Daily News** boxing writer*): "Unlike Shane Mosley taking the rematch against Vernon Forrest so close to their first fight, I think Vernon should absolutely take this rematch quickly, because Vernon fought the wrong fight the first time. If Vernon uses his skills and just boxes, he doesn't get caught again. If you have a decent jab and you're a decent boxer, you can keep Mayorga off of you. I don't think that anyone has used the jab to keep Mayorga off of them. I just don't see Vernon making the same mistakes. Machismo got in the way of Vernon. You don't beat Mayorga playing that game. Vernon will have get by the first five rounds, dictate the tempo, and win by unanimous decision."

CALVIN WATKINS (***Dallas Morning News** boxing writer*): "Vernon is almost in the same situation Shane Mosley was in last year when he lost, taking the rematch so soon. Vernon is trying to prove it was a fluke, but I don't think it was. Mayorga mentally has Vernon, and he'll have him again. Mayorga was a titleholder coming in, and I don't think Vernon gave Mayorga enough credit or respect the first time. Vernon will be a little more leery of the power Mayorga has, and I see it happening again. Vernon will box more this time, and that will drag it out. Mayorga is a master of manipulation, and he'll use that. Eventually, Mayorga will catch Vernon again. Mayorga has the belts, and Vernon has to take something from him this time."

ERIC BOTTJER (*matchmaker for Cedric Kushner Promotions*): "I think Forrest will win the rematch because he's the better fighter. The first fight, he hurt Mayorga pretty badly, and in being too anxious, he put himself in a threatening position. He won't put himself in that position this time around, and Forrest will win the fight. Forrest could knock Mayorga out, but he'll be smart. He'll realize the most important thing is to win. I don't know if Mayorga is capable of being in a dull fight, and Forrest doesn't have a dull track record either, other than his second fight with Mosley. Forrest will know how to come at Mayorga this time."

RICARDO JIMENEZ (*Hispanic Public Relations Director for Top Rank and former sports editor of **La Opinion***): "I'm a big believer that whatever happens the first time will happen the second time. Mayorga knocked out Forrest the first





PHOTOS BY DUANE JONES

Will Mayorga's bad habits, like smoking (left) and drinking (right), catch up to him if his rematch with Forrest goes into the later rounds? Junior welterweight star Arturo Gatti certainly thinks so.

PHOTO BY JAN SANDERS

Forrest caught Mayorga with hard punches in their first meeting, but Mayorga showed an excellent chin. The mistake Forrest made, according to matchmaker Eric Bottjer, was that he got too anxious and left himself vulnerable to Mayorga's heavy blasts.

time, and I think he'll knock out Forrest again. The only difference is that the fight will go longer this time because Vernon will be a little leery about going in and trading with Mayorga. But eventually, I see Vernon going in, and Mayorga will knock him out again. What I've seen of Mayorga is that he's a big strong kid, and it will take someone as big and strong to keep him away. I don't think Vernon has the strength to keep him away."

KERMIT CINTRON (*welterweight contender*): "Vernon will win if he sticks to his plan and boxes. He'll win by decision, but I don't think it will be a boring fight, because Mayorga comes to fight. Vernon will have to keep his jab going and box him from the outside."

BRIAN KENNY (*ESPN2 **Friday Night Fights** studio host*): "Forrest will engage and trade with Mayorga, but not in those long 12- and 15-second intervals like the first fight. Forrest will go into the rematch with a tremendous amount of respect for Mayorga's power, because he may have been a little arrogant about staying in there and trading with Mayorga. Mayorga will press the issue no matter what. It won't be a dull fight. There is a lot of unfinished business for Vernon, that's why I see Vernon winning by a decision. He will hurt Mayorga a number of times, blister him with combinations, and then get out of harm's way."

VIVIAN HARRIS (*junior welterweight contender*): "Vernon Forrest will beat Mayorga this time. Mayorga is a good, strong fighter, but Vernon didn't even prepare the first time. He probably didn't train as hard, thinking he just beat Shane Mosley twice. I think Mayorga was just lucky. All Vernon has to do is prepare well. Vernon has to keep his guard up and use his skills. I don't give Mayorga any chance. Vernon will knock him out sometime after the sixth round."

BUDDY McGIRT (*trainer of junior welterweight contender Arturo Gatti*): "Vernon will win, easy. The last fight, he just got off his game plan and he underestimated Mayorga's punching power a little bit. Vernon will stick his left jab in Mayorga's face and control the fight with that. Every time Mayorga starts swinging wide, you go to the body and break him down. Vernon will have to break Mayorga's confidence, that's the key to beating a guy like that."

ANTONIO DIAZ (*welterweight contender*): "Forrest will be able to take the fight, if he fights his fight and not Mayorga's fight. Mayorga is a just a

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PHOTO BY JAN SANDERS

Though most experts predicted that Forrest will even the score, many acknowledged the possibility of Forrest having to look up from the canvas in shocked disbelief again.

banger, and he's a stronger man than Forrest. I think Forrest is a great boxer and a smarter fighter. He'll fight the style that made him a world champion."

CARLOS ARIAS (***Orange County Register*** *boxing writer*): "I know a lot of people thought it was an upset when Mayorga beat Forrest the first time. But there are people out here on the West Coast that thought Mayorga would take Forrest out. Vernon underestimated Mayorga the first time around. Can Mayorga do it again? We know Mayorga has the power and we know he has the chin. Now that Vernon realizes that Mayorga is a punching machine, he'll take Mayorga into the later rounds and win the rematch. Vernon definitely has the better skills and he's the better fighter. Vernon just has to be smart and he can't get caught up with a wild brawl against Mayorga. Forrest by decision."

EMANUEL STEWARD (*Hall of Fame trainer and HBO color analyst*): "I believe Vernon Forrest will win the rematch, like all focused all-around talented fighters do. To me, if I were Forrest, I would go right on the attack and get after Mayorga to the inside, and beat him with shorter punches. Mayorga fights from long distances because he needs that swing zone. Forrest can't fight at the same distance, and he has smart people around him. They won't let him do the same things he did the first time. Vernon wins by a unanimous decision."

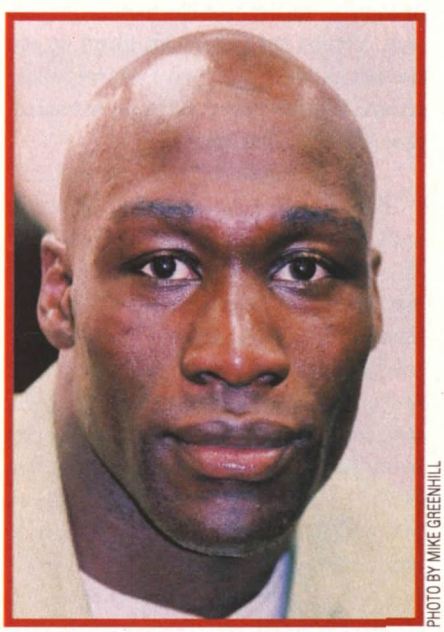

PHOTO BY MIKE GREENHILL

Junior welterweight contender "Chop Chop" Corley is one of the few who thinks Mayorga will knock Forrest out again, maintaining that "if he hits Vernon, he'll hurt him."

DeMARCUS CORLEY (*junior welterweight contender*): "Vernon could win his title back, and he can do it with just boxing. But people don't want to see that. They want see these two guys go in there and exchange punches, and I think Mayorga could pull Vernon into another brawl. I'd like to see Vernon win, but it won't happen. It'll be hard for Vernon to set the pace, and Vernon was trying to prove he could punch. Mayorga can punch, and if he hits Vernon, he'll hurt him. Vernon never took any punches like that before, so I see Mayorga winning by knockout again."

MAX KELLERMAN (*studio analyst for ESPN2's* ***Friday Night Fights***): "Mayorga never hit Forrest cleanly that first fight. The knockout punch landed high on Forrest's head, yet you could tell that Forrest was clearly in big trouble. That told me that Mayorga could stop Forrest without even landing his best shot. But I still believe Forrest is a cut above Mayorga. Vernon psychologically will be cautious and control the fight with his left jab. I like Vernon to win a boring, sloppy fight on points. When Mayorga comes right at Forrest, Vernon is going to tie Mayorga right up. Forrest wins by decision, but this comes with the understanding that Mayorga could knock Vernon out at any time."

ANTHONY THOMPSON (*welterweight prospect*): "This time, Vernon will stick to the basics, and he has all of the assets to beat Mayorga. He'll be able to keep Mayorga away by basically turning him, using combinations, clinching him, keeping Mayorga off his rhythm. He'll have to use his stick and use his height. Mayorga is more a forward-type fighter, and I'd like to see it go into the later rounds, because I don't think Mayorga can keep that pace. Forrest will win by a late-round stoppage, because I don't think Mayorga can stay with that vicious pace."

TOTALS: Forrest 16, Mayorga 4 ■

ALL STAR REPORT CARDS

The RING GRADES BOXING'S ELITE

By Nigel Collins & Eric Raskin

Like no other sport, boxing rises and falls on the strength of its stars. Sure, pro basketball attendance dips when Michael Jordan retires, and there aren't as many fans in the stands when Randy Johnson isn't pitching for the Arizona Diamondbacks. But the absence of a star player is nowhere near as devastating in team sports as it is where boxing is concerned.

If Jordan or Johnson aren't playing, someone will fill their spot, and the game goes on. But if Mike Tyson pulls out of a fight, the entire event is usually canceled. It's tough enough for boxing to garner attention from the mainstream media, but without a major marquee name topping the bill, most shows are virtually ignored. That might not be fair, but it's a reality the fight game has to live with.

Yes, it's the stars that bring out the fans, and without them boxing would be even more marginalized than it already is. That's the reason managers, promoters, and TV networks are so protective of any fighter they think might develop into a bankable commodity. Of course, there has to be considerable substance beneath the charisma, because in order to become a leading attraction, fighters have to be able to do more than generate hype. They have to be able to compete successfully with their peers, and at this level we're talking about the best of the best.

It is because of their overwhelming importance to the health of the Sweet Science that THE RING *has decided to evaluate today's biggest stars.*

Obviously, each of the 20 fighters under review is currently doing well both in the ring and at the box office, or they wouldn't be included. But it's all relative, because even within this small group there are degrees of stardom. Clearly, Paulie Ayala isn't in Oscar De La Hoya's league as either a fighter or an attraction, but the fact that Ayala made the list is indicative of how few fighters comprise boxing's elite constellation.

This is unlike most of the other lists THE RING *has previously published. This time we are taking a broader view and considering far more than wins, losses, and title belts. Each fighter is graded in five categories—talent (the combination of natural and acquired ability), achievement (which takes into consideration both past and current accomplishments), marketability (the ability to attract attention and sell themselves), support system (manager, trainer, promoter, etc.), and growth potential (the probability of increasing fame and/or fortune).*

There has been no attempt to arrange the 20 fighters in order of their overall grades. Instead, they are listed in order of size, starting with the heavyweights and working down in weight. While there are bound to be disagreements concerning individual grades, this is one list every fighter in the world wants to be a part of.

ALL STAR REPORT CARDS

Lennox Lewis

40-2-1 (31)

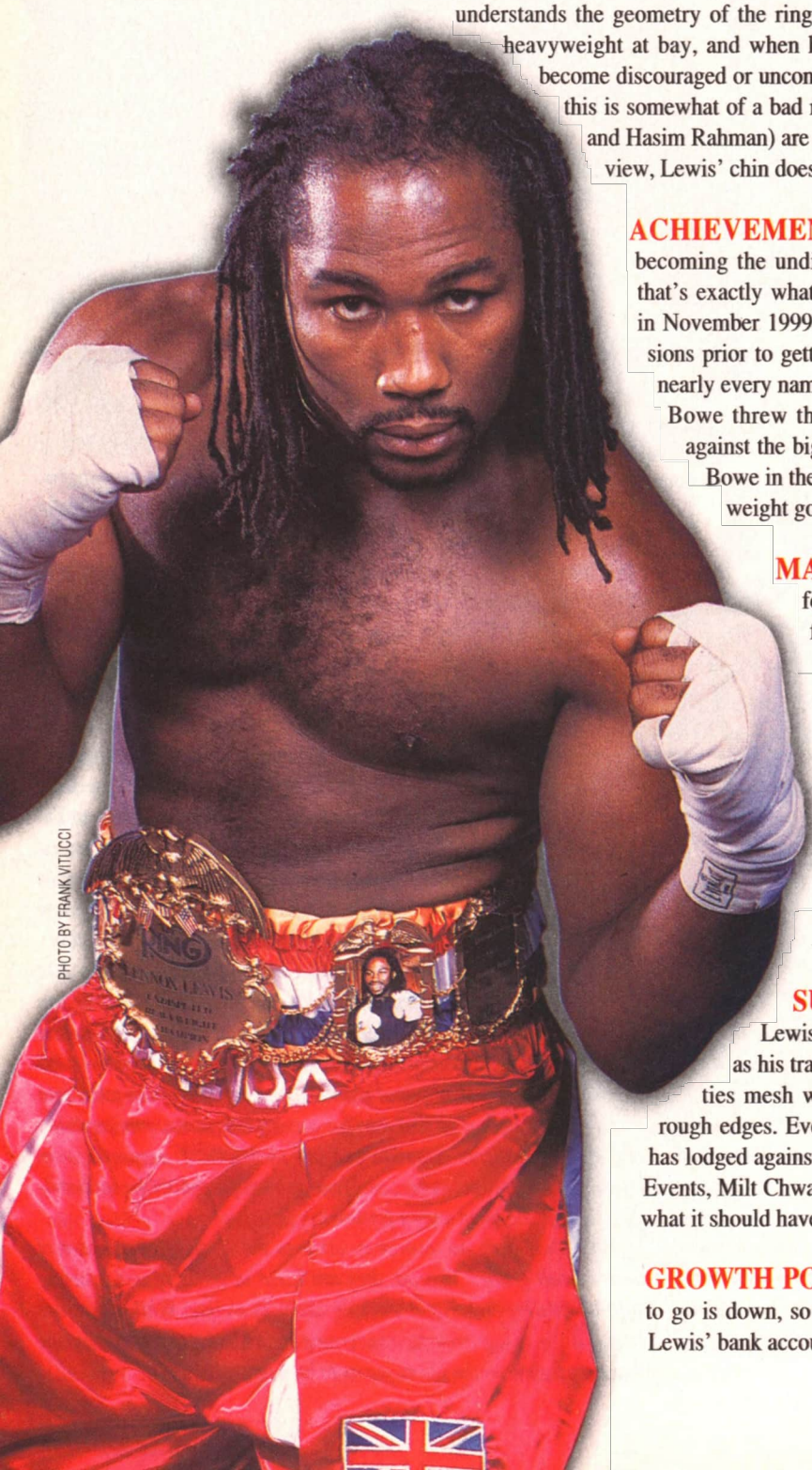

PHOTO BY FRANK VITUCCI

TALENT: The enigmatic Englishman is the first super-sized heavyweight—and we're talking really big here (6'5", 250 pounds)—who had the skill and smarts to take full advantage of his bulk. Lewis not only moves around with a reasonable amount of athletic grace, he understands the geometry of the ring. His left jab is so long, it can hold virtually any heavyweight at bay, and when he puts his right hand behind it, opponents either become discouraged or unconscious. His chin has been extensively criticized, but this is somewhat of a bad rap. The two men who stopped him (Oliver McCall and Hasim Rahman) are both terrific punchers, and if you take a career-wide view, Lewis' chin doesn't look all that bad after all.

Grade: A-

ACHIEVEMENT: You can't climb any higher in boxing than becoming the undisputed heavyweight champion of the world, and that's exactly what Lewis did when he decisioned Evander Holyfield in November 1999. He'd previously held the WBC belt on two occasions prior to getting a shot at the genuine article. Lewis has beaten nearly every name heavyweight of his era. And even though Riddick Bowe threw the WBC belt in the trash can rather than defend against the big Brit, it should be remembered that Lewis stopped Bowe in the '88 Olympics en route to winning the super heavyweight gold medal.

Grade: A+

MARKETABILITY: Had he come along three or four decades ago, Lewis probably would have been far more popular than he is. Unfortunately, well-mannered black men who lead quiet private lives are no longer in vogue. Today, with rare exceptions, a fighter has got to either be a thug, an egomaniac, or a Latino to strike a loud enough chord to get noticed. Not even the English took to Lewis the way you'd expect, partly because he spent much of his youth living in Canada (the country he represented in the Olympics), and partly because of a demeanor that made him seem more aloof that he actually is.

Grade: B

SUPPORT SYSTEM: After a few false starts, Lewis finally settled on Hall of Famer Emanuel Steward as his trainer, and it's worked out very well. Their personalities mesh well, and Steward has helped smooth out a lot of rough edges. Even so, judging by all the successful lawsuits Lewis has lodged against former members of his team (Panos Eliades, Main Events, Milt Chwasky), the business end of his support system wasn't what it should have been

Grade: B

GROWTH POTENTIAL: When you're on top, the only place to go is down, so at this point the only thing that figures to grow is Lewis' bank account.

Grade: B+

ALL STAR REPORT CARDS

Chris Byrd

36-2 (20)

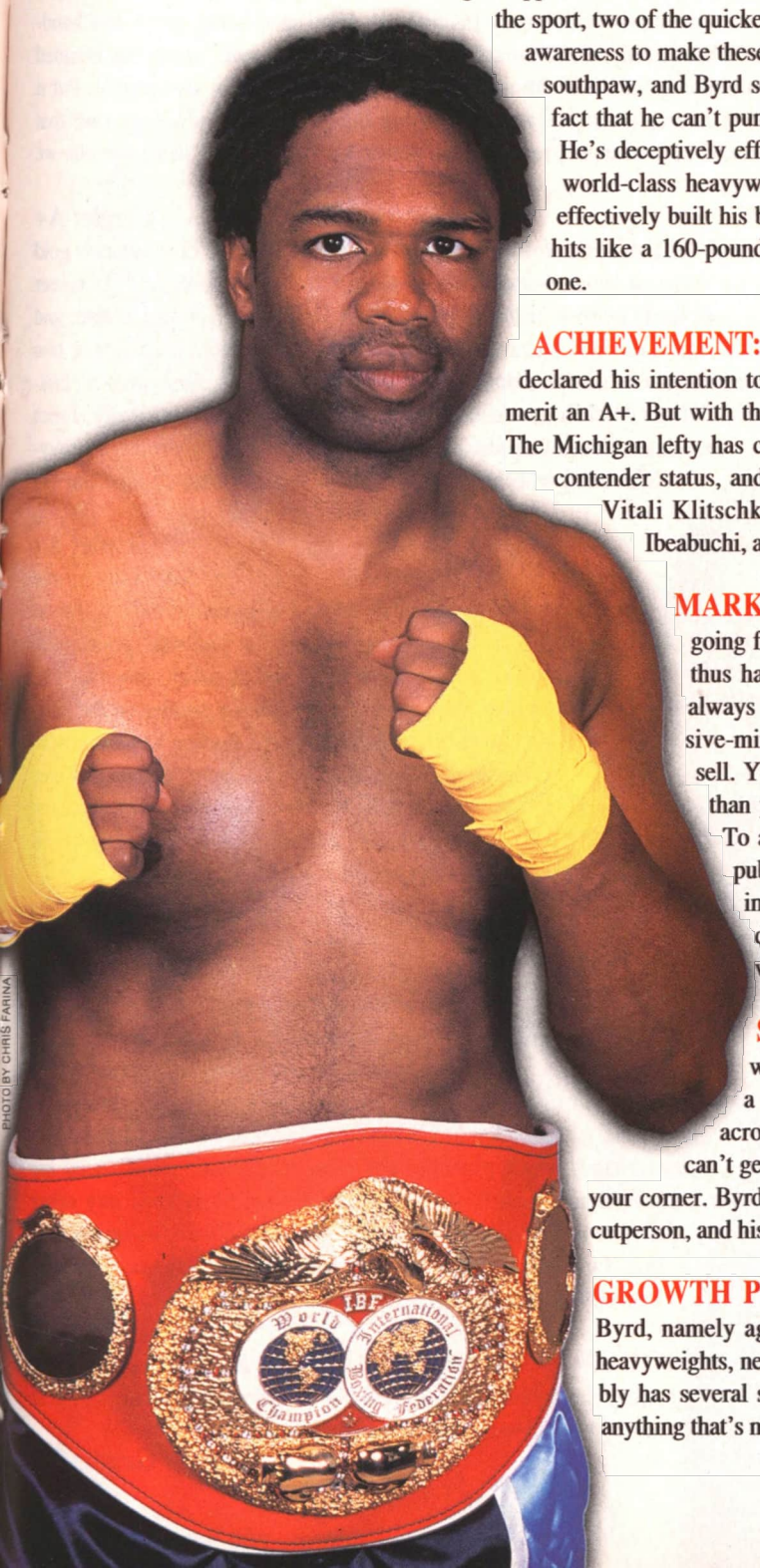

PHOTO BY CHRIS FARINA

TALENT: When you stand just 6'1" and weigh only 215 pounds, you'd better have a heckuva lot of talent to survive in today's plus-sized heavyweight division. Routinely taking on opponents who dwarf him, Byrd relies on perhaps the sharpest defensive reflexes in the sport, two of the quickest, peskiest fists in heavyweight history, and uncanny ring awareness to make these larger men look ridiculous. Throw in the fact that he's a southpaw, and Byrd seems to have everything going for him … except for the fact that he can't punch. Byrd is to punching what Mike Tyson is to karaoke. He's deceptively effective going to the body, but the next time Byrd hurts a world-class heavyweight with a headshot will be the first time. Though he effectively built his body up from a middleweight to a heavyweight, Byrd still hits like a 160-pounder, and even if that's his only shortcoming, it's a major one.

Grade: B+

ACHIEVEMENT: Compared to what the experts predicted for him when he declared his intention to become a heavyweight, Byrd's achievements probably merit an A+. But with that perspective removed, his resume isn't overwhelming. The Michigan lefty has captured an alphabet belt, earned legitimate number-one contender status, and beaten the likes of Evander Holyfield, David Tua, and Vitali Klitschko. But he's also lost to Wladimir Klitschko and Ike Ibeabuchi, and both defeats were convincing.

Grade: B

MARKETABILITY: The one thing the flicker from Flint has going for him is that he fights in boxing's glamour division, and thus has managed to earn some seven-figure paydays. There's always an audience for heavyweights, even light-hitting, defensive-minded ones. But as heavyweights go, Byrd is one tough sell. You're more likely to see a tomahawk dunk in the WNBA than you are to see a highlight-reel knockout in a Byrd fight. To an extent, Byrd's nice-guy personality can be sold to the public as an anti-Tyson, and he definitely projects a positive image not always associated with the fight game, but that doesn't change the fact Byrd will never become a pay-per-view drawing card.

Grade: C+

SUPPORT SYSTEM: A good heavyweight can't go wrong with Don King behind him, and Byrd has developed a close, personal relationship with DK now that he lives across the street from the controversial promoter. And you can't get any closer and more personal than having your family in your corner. Byrd's father, Joe, is his head trainer, his mother, Rose, is his cutperson, and his brother, Patrick, is the second assist.

Grade: A

GROWTH POTENTIAL: There are good paydays out there for Byrd, namely against Lennox Lewis and Roy Jones, but like most top heavyweights, neither wants a piece of Byrd. As a fighter, Byrd, 32, probably has several successful years still ahead of him, but he may never do anything that's more noteworthy in the mainstream than beating Holyfield.

Grade: B-

ALL STAR REPORT CARDS

Roy Jones

48-1 (38)

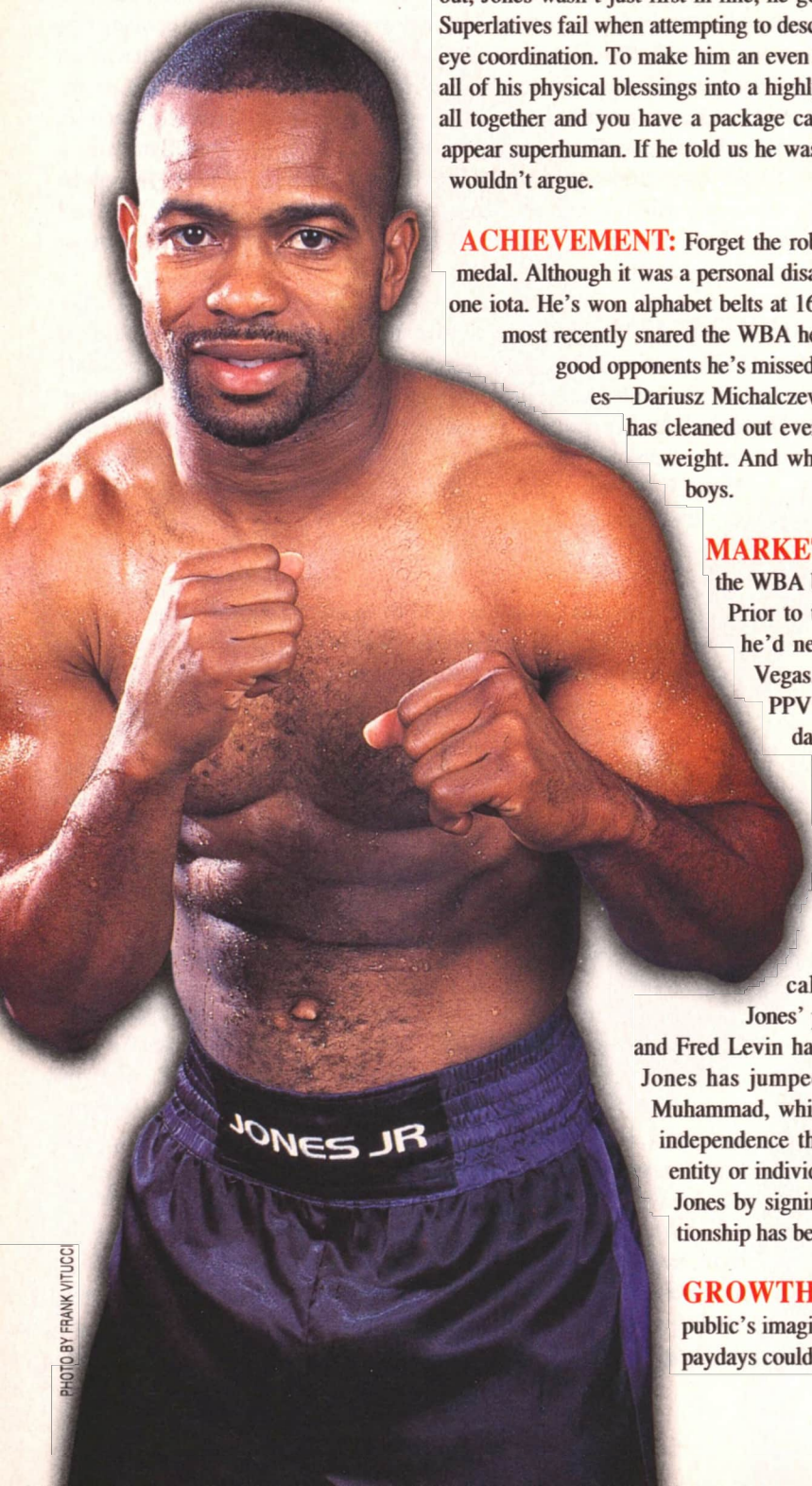

PHOTO BY FRANK VITUCCI

TALENT: The U.S. Constitution claims that all men are created equal, but the Founding Fathers didn't know about Roy Jones. When the gift of athletic capability was being handed out, Jones wasn't just first in line, he got there the night before and slept on the sidewalk. Superlatives fail when attempting to describe his reflexes, hand speed, foot speed, and hand-eye coordination. To make him an even tougher dilemma for opponents, Jones has blended all of his physical blessings into a highly unorthodox yet fundamentally sound style. Put it all together and you have a package capable of doing things inside of a boxing ring that appear superhuman. If he told us he was from the planet Krypton instead of Pensacola, we wouldn't argue.

Grade: A+

ACHIEVEMENT: Forget the robbery at the 1988 Olympics that cost Jones a gold medal. Although it was a personal disappointment, the ripoff has not hampered his career one iota. He's won alphabet belts at 160 and 168, unified the light heavyweight title, and most recently snared the WBA heavyweight belt. While there have been one or two good opponents he's missed during his march through the various weight classes—Dariusz Michalczewski comes immediately to mind—basically, Jones has cleaned out every division he's fought in until becoming a heavyweight. And who knows how far he'll go boxing against the big boys.

Grade: A+

MARKETABILITY: The victory over John Ruiz to win the WBA belt was a major economic breakthrough for Jones. Prior to that, his pay-per-view fights had sold poorly and he'd never before attracted a substantial crowd in Las Vegas. But more than 500,000 homes purchased the Ruiz PPV and more than 15,000 live bodies were in attendance at the Thomas & Mack Center. Although Jones has been on Nike's payroll for a number of years, he really hasn't cashed in endorsement-wise to the extent he might have.

Grade: A-

SUPPORT SYSTEM: Since splitting with his father during the early part of his pro career, he has been trained by Alton Merkerson, whose calm, scholarly demeanor seems to fit well with Jones' personality. Although self-managed, attorneys Stan and Fred Levin have long been part of Roy's team. Promotionally, Jones has jumped around a bit, but usually works with Murad Muhammad, which probably has more to do with Jones' need for independence than Muhammad's expertise. More than any other entity or individual, HBO has provided the bulwark of support for Jones by signing him to a series of lucrative contracts. The relationship has been stormy at times, but enduring.

Grade: A-

GROWTH POTENTIAL: Now that he's captured the public's imagination by fighting as a heavyweight, Jones' biggest paydays could very well be ahead of him.

Grade: A+

ALL STAR REPORT CARDS

Evander Holyfield

38-6-2 (25)

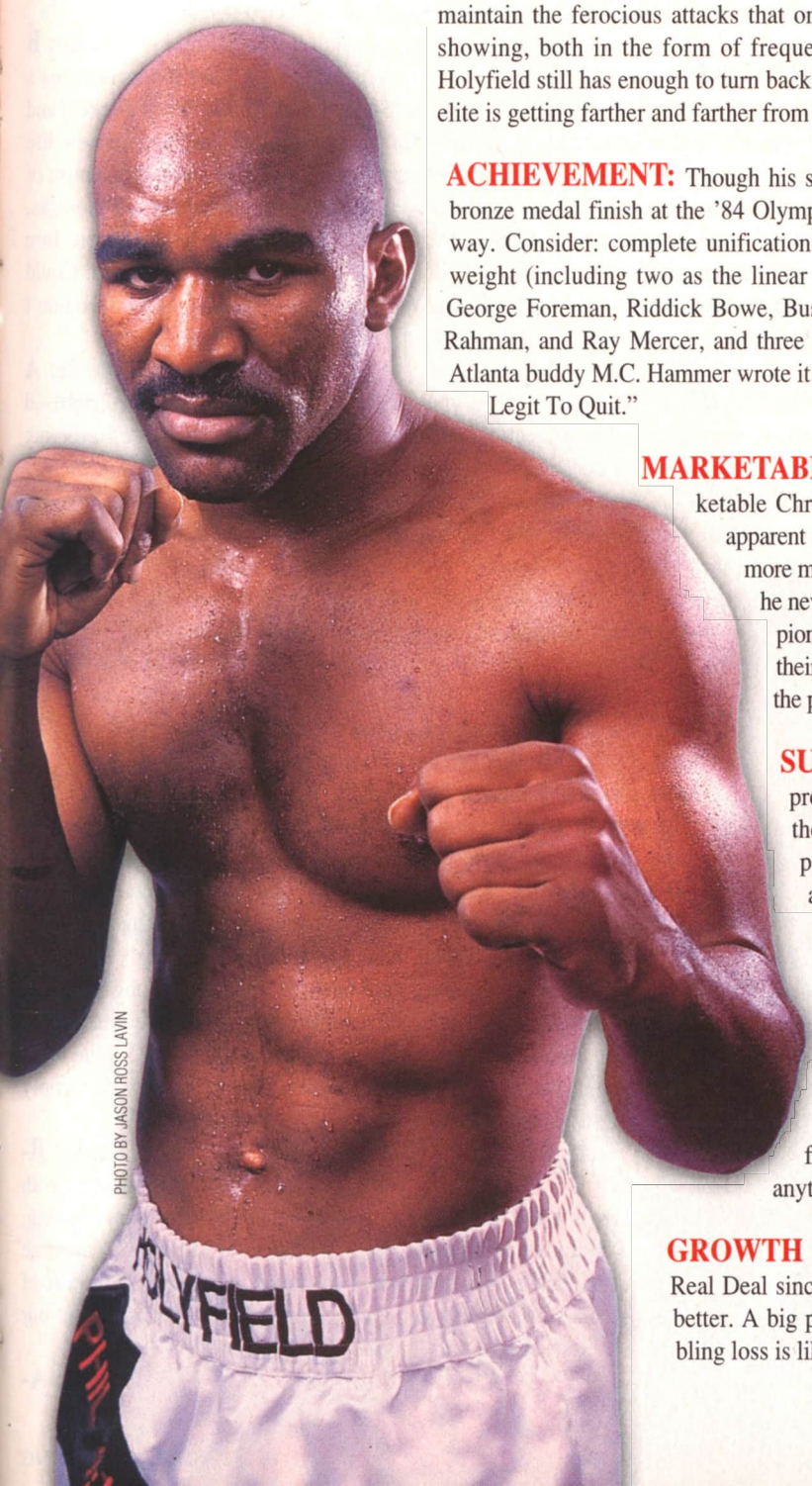

PHOTO BY JASON ROSS LAVIN

TALENT: Even in his prime, Holyfield was an overachiever who gained all-time great status with hard work and determination more so than with natural talent. That being said, he was still a marvelous talent, a boxer-puncher with good speed, good power, great counter-punching ability, and a first-rate chin. Now, however, at age 40, not much remains except the chin. Holyfield only resembles "The Real Deal" of old in brief spurts, as he's unable to maintain the ferocious attacks that once made him great. Age and the toll of warfare are showing, both in the form of frequent injuries and in his slowed reflexes. Amazingly, Holyfield still has enough to turn back any middle-of-the-road heavyweights, but beating the elite is getting farther and farther from his grasp.

Grade: B

ACHIEVEMENT: Though his sensational amateur career ended with a disappointing bronze medal finish at the '84 Olympics, Holyfield's pro career hasn't disappointed in any way. Consider: complete unification of the cruiserweight title, four title reigns at heavyweight (including two as the linear champion), victories over the likes of Mike Tyson, George Foreman, Riddick Bowe, Buster Douglas, Larry Holmes, Michael Moorer, Hasim Rahman, and Ray Mercer, and three Fighter of the Year awards from THE RING. Whether Atlanta buddy M.C. Hammer wrote it about him or not, Holyfield was the definition of "Too Legit To Quit."

Grade: A+

MARKETABILITY: Considering that his bout with the not-so-marketable Chris Byrd was HBO's highest-rated fight of 2002, it's apparent that the Holyfield name still sells. Nobody has earned more money in the ring than Evander, although outside the ring, he never quite crossed over the way many heavyweight champions do. And at this point, he's not going to. Nobody wants their products endorsed by a guy in his 40s who has become the poster boy for not knowing when to hang 'em up.

Grade: B+

SUPPORT SYSTEM: On the one hand, thanks to promoter Don King, Holyfield remains a viable part of the heavyweight picture. On the other hand, most compassionate fans don't want to see that viability tested anymore, and Holyfield's advisers either can't convince him to quit or aren't trying very hard to convince him. Lawyer/adviser Jim Thomas has been of great service to Holyfield for years, but if he really wanted to help his client, he'd tell him to give up the dream of becoming undisputed champ again. As for trainer Don Turner, it's hard to say whether it's his fault or just the fact that Holyfield is a worn-down fighter, but a 2-3-2 record over the last four years isn't anything to be proud of.

Grade: B

GROWTH POTENTIAL: It's been mostly downhill for The Real Deal since the Tyson fights, and it isn't going to suddenly get better. A big payday against Roy Jones is in the offing, but a humbling loss is likely to come along with it.

Grade: C-

ALL STAR REPORT CARDS

Mike Tyson

50-4 (44)
with 2 no-contests

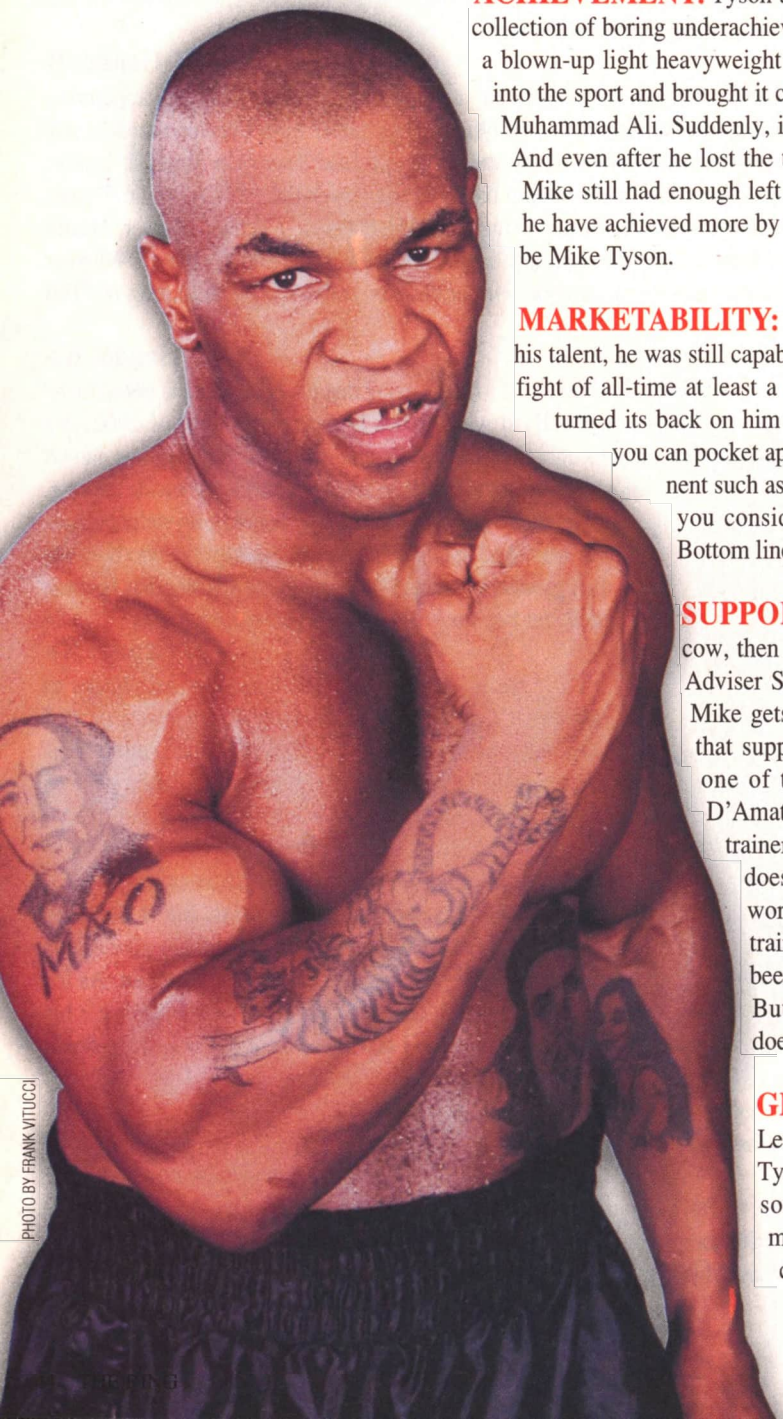

PHOTO BY FRANK VITUCCI

TALENT: If we're talking about Tyson today, we're talking about eroded talent. But when Tyson charged onto the scene in mid-1980s, he owned one of the most precious combinations a heavyweight can possess—speed and power. And it didn't end there. He employed excellent upper-body movement and punched in blazing combinations to both head and body. But his work ethic slipped farther and farther as the years passed, and the Tyson we see today—basically a one-punch-at-a-time headhunter—is the result of neglected talent.

Grade: B

ACHIEVEMENT: Tyson unified the heavyweight title at a time when it was ruled by a collection of boring underachievers (Trevor Berbick, Bonecrusher Smith, Tony Tucker) and a blown-up light heavyweight (Michael Spinks). But more than that, he pumped new life into the sport and brought it closer to the mainstream than at any time since the demise of Muhammad Ali. Suddenly, it was cool to be a boxing fan again, especially a Tyson fan. And even after he lost the title to Buster Douglas and spent three years in prison, Iron Mike still had enough left to regain the WBC and WBA portions of the crown. Could he have achieved more by leading a different lifestyle? Probably. But then he wouldn't be Mike Tyson.

Grade: A

MARKETABILITY: Hey, say what you will about the way Tyson has squandered his talent, he was still capable of creating, along with Lennox Lewis, the largest grossing fight of all-time at least a decade past his fighting prime. True, Madison Avenue has turned its back on him for obvious reasons, but who needs Madison Avenue when you can pocket approximately $5-million for bowling over a tailor-made opponent such as Cliff Etienne? Tyson's enduring popularity is amazing when you consider that he hasn't held even an alphabet title since 1996. Bottom line: Tyson is still the best known fighter in the world.

Grade: A+

SUPPORT SYSTEM: If you look at Tyson strictly as a cash cow, then you have to figure he has the best support system possible. Adviser Shelly Finkel is a tenacious negotiator, and makes sure Iron Mike gets top dollar for his services. If, on the other hand, you feel that support goes beyond the balance sheet, Tyson may have been one of the most poorly handled fighters in history. After Cus D'Amato died and Kevin Rooney was fired, he never really found a trainer or manager who suited his special needs. But that certainly doesn't absolve Tyson, who has grown increasingly averse to working hard on a consistent basis. Several of his long-suffering trainers have tried to enforce some discipline, while others have been enablers riding the gravy train, afraid to confront the boss. But in the end, it all comes down to Tyson, and he simply doesn't seem to care.

Grade: B-

GROWTH POTENTIAL: With a potential rematch with Lewis in the works and a possible bout with Roy Jones brewing, Tyson isn't going to be flipping burgers at McDonalds anytime soon. He's still positioned to make an obscene amount of money before he's done, which probably says more about our culture than it does Tyson.

Grade: A-

ALL STAR REPORT CARDS

James Toney

66-4-2 (42)

PHOTO BY JAN SANDERS

TALENT: In his prime, Toney was at or near the top of everybody's pound-for-pound list, hallowed ground reserved only for exceptionally talented fighters. Ten years and some 30 pounds and 35 fights later, "Lights Out" isn't a pound-for-pounder, but he's still one of the craftiest, most skilled pugilists on the planet. Few fighters can slip, duck, block, and roll with punches as expertly as Toney, and his defense sets up an offense of sharp, effective strikes that have proven heavy enough to hurt men in four weight divisions. For a 34-year-old with 72 fights on his log, Toney is surprisingly fresh and deserves to be favored over all the other rated cruiserweights.

Grade: B+

ACHIEVEMENT: Call Toney an underachiever if you like, but he's still had a phenomenal career. Although there were some lean years in the late-'90s (when Toney was anything but lean), what he got done in the early-'90s and what he's doing now in the new millennium will probably earn him a plaque at the Hall of Fame. He made six defenses of the IBF middleweight belt, then won the IBF super middleweight belt and made three successful defenses, and nearly a decade after his last major title fight, just recently won the IBF cruiserweight title. He was THE RING Fighter of the Year in '91, and his resume includes such notables as Michael Nunn, Reggie Johnson, Mike McCallum, Iran Barkley, Prince Charles Williams, and Vassiliy Jirov. With more training and less eating, perhaps Toney could've done more. Regardless, he's done plenty.

Grade: A

MARKETABILITY: Toney is still a big name with a big mouth, which will combine to make big money a possibility. Unfortunately, he fights at 190 pounds, and being the best and most marketable cruiserweight in the world is kind of like being the best offensive lineman in the CFL—nobody cares all that much.

Grade: B

SUPPORT SYSTEM: Toney's comeback had been starting and stalling for three years, but then he hooked up with promoter Dan Goossen and things have taken off quickly. While HBO isn't offering Toney any long-term contracts, future dates on the network are a strong possibility, proof of how well the Toney-Goossen team is working. With the excellent Freddie Roach working the corner, Toney has all the elements in place. Let's just hope he doesn't snap and threaten to kill any of his employees the next time he loses.

Grade: A-

GROWTH POTENTIAL: Toney has a difficult decision in front of him: make decent money to defend his cruiserweight belt, or make better money to get out of shape and get beaten by top heavyweights. A Chris Byrd fight could hold some intrigue, and certainly a Roy Jones fight would be sellable. Toney would unquestionably be more effective as a cruiser, though, so maybe he can convince Jones to meet him at 190 and enjoy the best of both worlds.

Grade: B

ALI STAR REPORT CARDS

Laila Ali

14-0-(11)

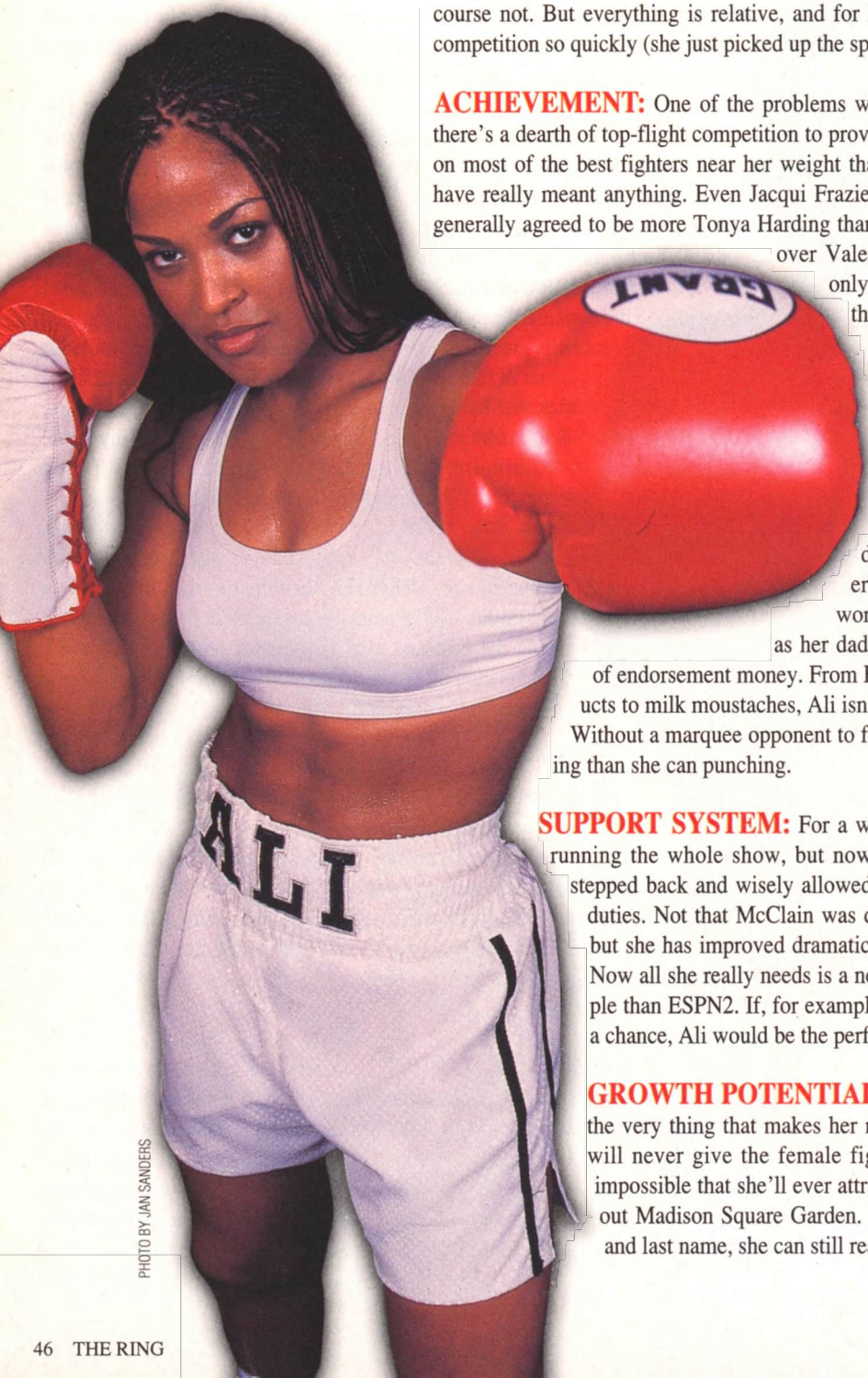

PHOTO BY JAN SANDERS

TALENT: Short of having two superstar professional athletes for parents (see Jaden Agassi), you can't ask for much better genes than what Ali was blessed with. Muhammad Ali's incredible gift for fighting doesn't appear to have skipped a generation, as Laila can jab, move, give a punch, and take a punch, and she even goes to the body effectively, something her famous dad never did. Is she as good as the top male fighters in the sport? Of course not. But everything is relative, and for her to have become so dominant over her competition so quickly (she just picked up the sport four years ago) is truly remarkable.

Grade: A-

ACHIEVEMENT: One of the problems with being a top-flight female boxer is that there's a dearth of top-flight competition to prove yourself against. And while Ali has taken on most of the best fighters near her weight that were available, none of her 14 victories have really meant anything. Even Jacqui Frazier-Lyde, her most high-profile opponent, is generally agreed to be more Tonya Harding than Eric Harding, more hype than skill. Wins over Valerie Mahfood and Mary Ann Almager (the only opponents on Ali's resume who had more than 10 wins entering their fights with Laila) aren't totally meaningless, but they've hardly proven the greatness of The Greatest's youngest daughter.

Grade: C-

MARKETABILITY: Regardless of whether she ever makes it onto the cover of *Sports Illustrated* like Christy Martin did, Ali is the most marketable female fighter of all-time. She not only has the Ali name working for her, she's also every bit as pretty as her dad, and she's spun all that into a sweet stash of endorsement money. From Ford automobiles to L'Oreal hair care products to milk moustaches, Ali isn't reluctant to shill, and why should she be? Without a marquee opponent to fight, she can make a lot more money pitching than she can punching.

Grade: A

SUPPORT SYSTEM: For a while, Ali's husband, Johnny McClain, was running the whole show, but now he's just the promoter/manager and has stepped back and wisely allowed Roger Mayweather to handle the training duties. Not that McClain was doing a bad job as his wife's chief second, but she has improved dramatically since Mayweather entered the picture. Now all she really needs is a network behind her that can reach more people than ESPN2. If, for example, HBO decides to give the women's game a chance, Ali would be the perfect person to start with.

Grade: B+

GROWTH POTENTIAL: The only thing limiting Ali's potential is the very thing that makes her most unique: her gender. Some sports fans will never give the female fighters a chance, and so it's more or less impossible that she'll ever attract a half-million pay-per-view buys or sell out Madison Square Garden. But aside from that, with her skills, looks, and last name, she can still reach unprecedented heights.

Grade: A-

ALL STAR REPORT CARDS

Bernard Hopkins

42-2-1 (31)
with 1 no-contest

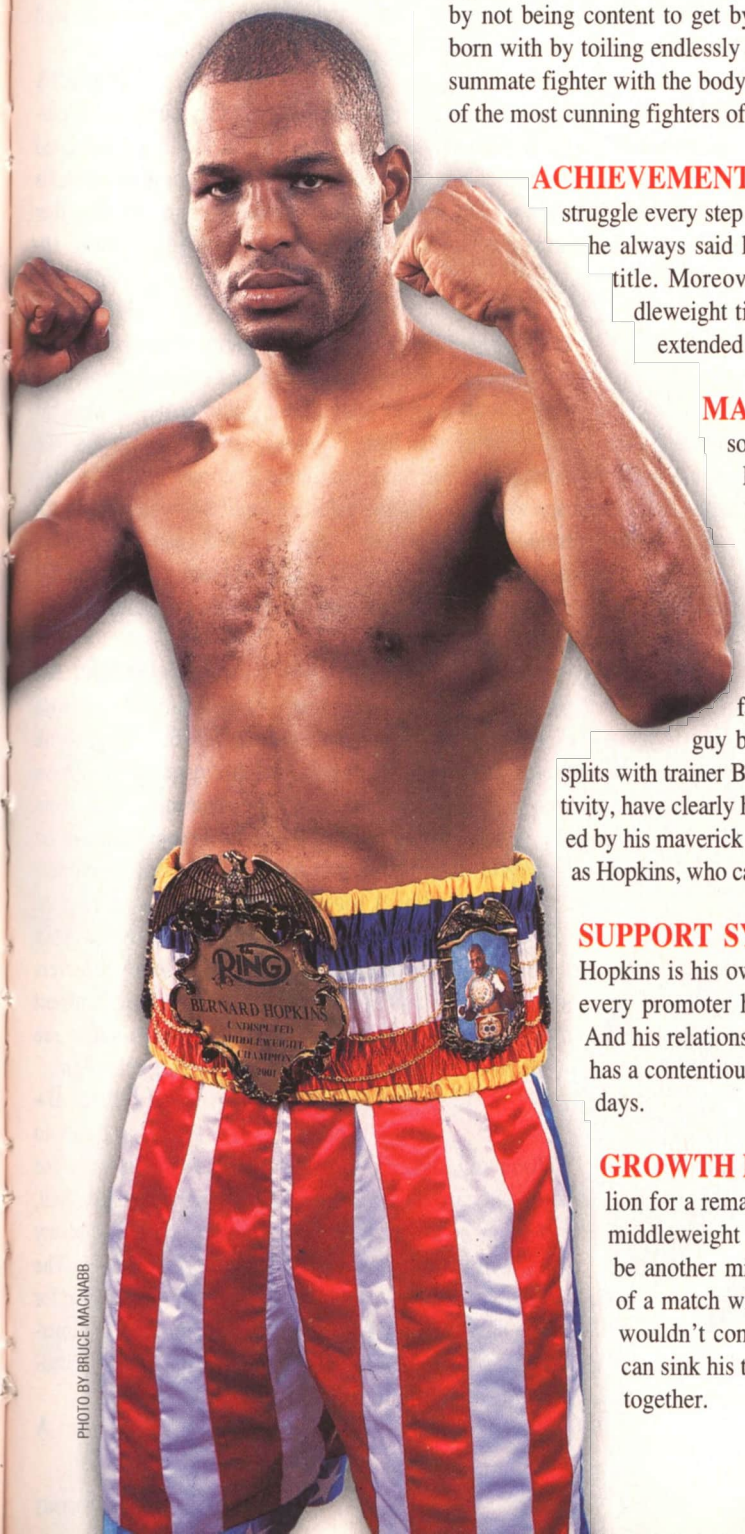

PHOTO BY BRUCE MACNABB

TALENT: Watching Hopkins fight is like taking a trip in a time machine, back to the days when virtually every neighborhood had a gym, and the trainers in those gyms were true teachers, not just guys with a line of bull and a towel thrown over their shoulder. Back then fighters learned their trade inside out, and Hopkins is a throwback who has mastered his art by not being content to get by on natural ability alone. Instead, he added to what he was born with by toiling endlessly in the gym, constantly refining his skills. The result is a consummate fighter with the body of a man a decade his junior and a boxing brain equal to that of the most cunning fighters of all-time.

Grade: A

ACHIEVEMENT: It took much longer than it should have, and it was a bitter struggle every step of the way, but "The Executioner" finally accomplished what he always said he would: clean out the middleweight division and unify the title. Moreover, he broke Carlos Monzon's record for successful middleweight title defenses that had stood for almost 30 years and has since extended that streak to 16 and counting.

Grade: A+

MARKETABILITY: For many years he toiled in obscurity, sometimes defending the IBF middleweight belt on low-budget ESPN shows for embarrassing money. Hardcore fans appreciated him, but for many, the most memorable thing about Hopkins was the executioner's hood he frequently wore into the ring. But Don King's Middleweight World Championship Series changed all that. Not too many people were surprised when Hopkins decisioned WBC titleholder Keith Holmes, but when he knocked out previously unbeaten and highly favored Felix Trinidad for the undisputed title, the Philly tough guy became an instant celebrity. Subsequent and highly publicized splits with trainer Bouie Fisher and adviser Lou DiBella, plus long periods of inactivity, have clearly hurt, but it remains to be seen how much. Many fans are attracted by his maverick image and there are few fighters who can hype an event as well as Hopkins, who can flap his gums almost as well as he can fight.

Grade: B+

SUPPORT SYSTEM: Right now, besides new trainer Sloan Harrison, Hopkins is his own support system. The self-managed champ has feuded with every promoter he's ever had, going toe-to-toe in court with most of them. And his relationship with current promoter King is far from chummy. He also has a contentious relationship with HBO, which has provided his biggest paydays.

Grade: C

GROWTH POTENTIAL: Having passed on a chance to earn $6-million for a rematch with Roy Jones, Hopkins' choices are limited. IBF junior middleweight titleholder Winky Wright is probably next, and while it will be another million-dollar purse, it's far from a superfight. The possibility of a match with De La Hoya is still dangling out there like a carrot, but it wouldn't come as a total surprise if Oscar yanks it away before Hopkins can sink his teeth into it, or waits until The Executioner has lost his bite all together.

Grade: B-

ALL STAR REPORT CARDS

Oscar De La Hoya

36-2 (29)

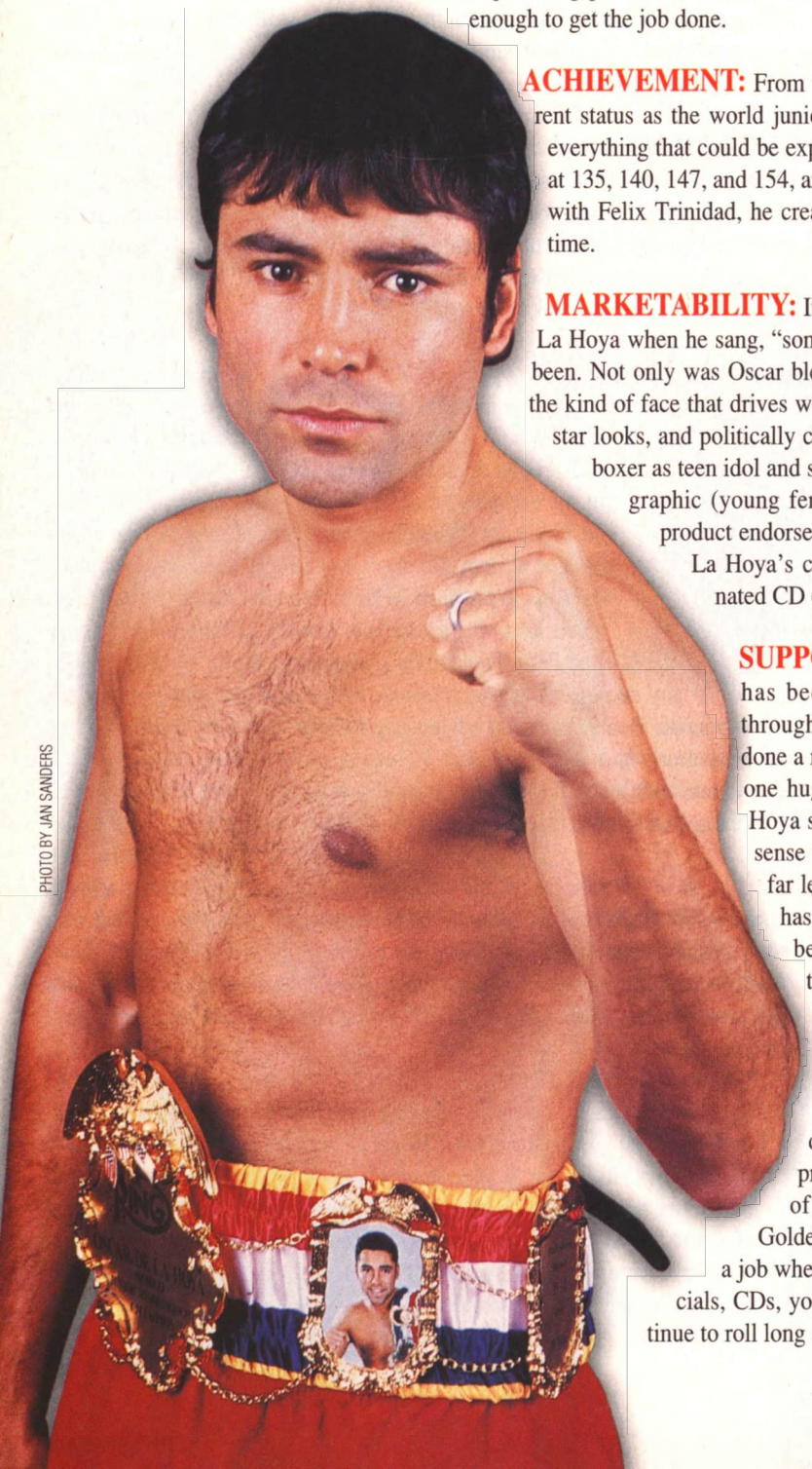

PHOTO BY JAN SANDERS

TALENT: Indoctrinated into the sport by a domineering father, De La Hoya virtually grew up in the gym, where most of boxing's finer points became second nature to him. Not only is Oscar athletically gifted, he owns the sort of body that has allowed him to successfully move up in weight as he's matured without losing any of his speed or mobility. Although his punching power isn't as awesome at 154 pounds as it was at 135, he still whacks well enough to get the job done.

Grade: A

ACHIEVEMENT: From winning a gold medal at the 1992 Olympics to his current status as the world junior middleweight champion, De La Hoya has achieved everything that could be expected of him and more. He's held major alphabet belts at 135, 140, 147, and 154, and was THE RING's Fighter of the Year in '95. Together with Felix Trinidad, he created the largest grossing non-heavyweight fight of all-time.

Grade: A+

MARKETABILITY: It's highly unlikely that Rod Stewart was referring to De La Hoya when he sang, "some guys have all the luck." But he certainly could have been. Not only was Oscar blessed with a great body and a killer smile, he also has the kind of face that drives women wild with lust. Together, his ring success, movie star looks, and politically correct persona have combined to create a new genre—boxer as teen idol and sex symbol. This has not only lured a whole new demographic (young females) to the Sweet Science, it has also led to more product endorsements than any boxer this side of George Foreman. De La Hoya's crossover appeal has also resulted in a Grammy-nominated CD of Latino love songs.

Grade: A+

SUPPORT SYSTEM: Except for two bouts, De La Hoya has been expertly promoted by Bob Arum's Top Rank throughout his pro career. Arum and his organization have done a masterful job, moving his number-one meal ticket from one huge payday to the next. It made no sense when De La Hoya split with Arum for a pair of fights, but it made perfect sense when they got back together. There has, however, been far less consistency when it comes to training. De La Hoya has run through a series of trainers, which some observers believe has retarded his growth as a fighter. Current trainer Floyd Mayweather Sr. claims we've yet to see the best from his prize pupil—and he might be right.

Grade: B+

GROWTH POTENTIAL: It's difficult to climb any higher when you're already the number-one drawing card outside of the heavyweight division. Still, providing he's willing to keep fighting, there are plenty of multimillion-dollar paydays ahead. Moreover, The Golden Boy is one fighter who won't have to go looking for a job when he hangs up his gloves. Television, movies, commercials, CDs, you name it—the De La Hoya money machine will continue to roll long after his final fight.

Grade: A

ALL STAR REPORT CARDS

Fernando Vargas

22-2 (20)

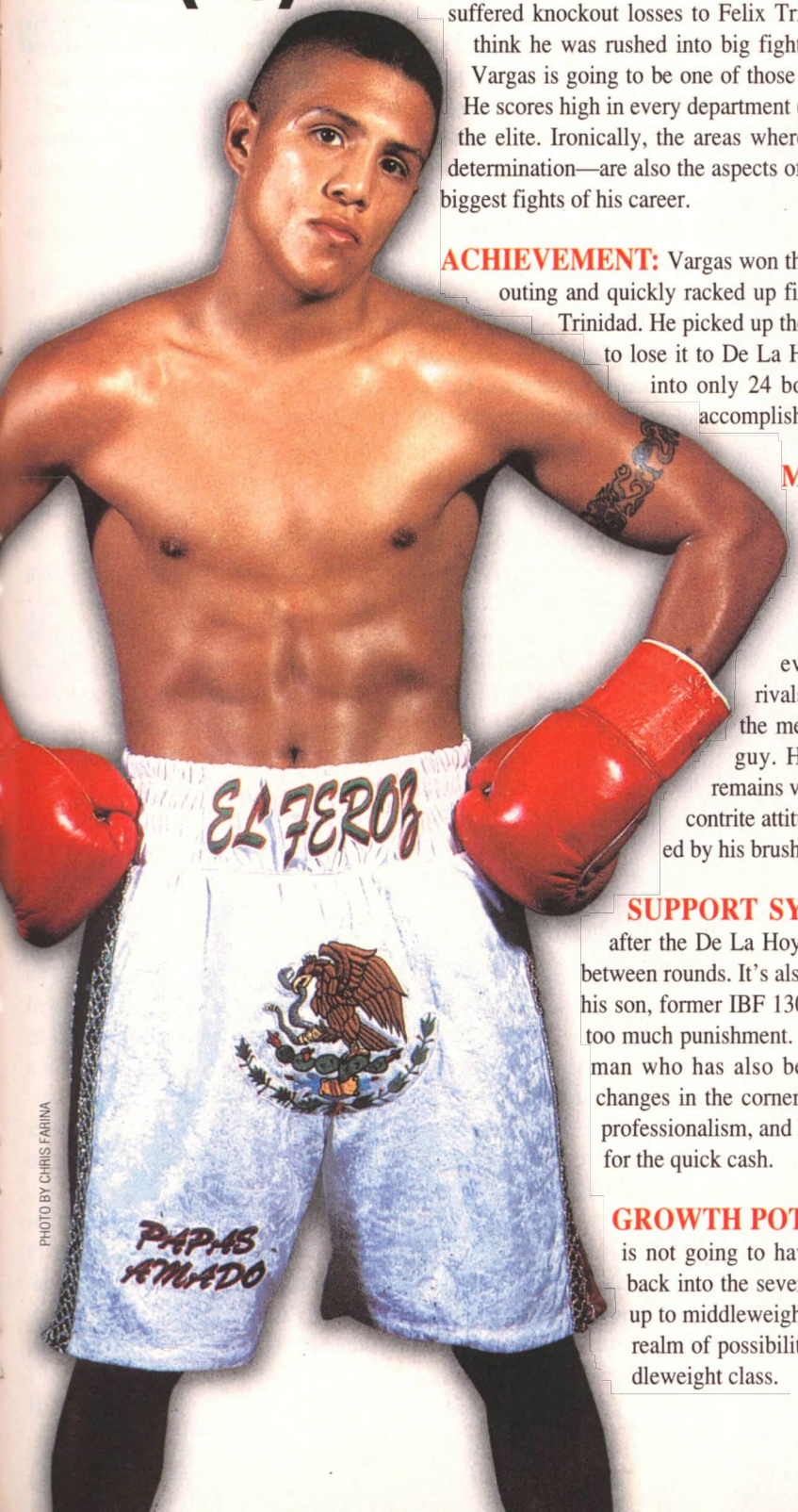

PHOTO BY CHRIS FARINA

TALENT: Right now Vargas is in danger of becoming the Latino Arturo Gatti, and while that's not a bad thing, it's not where most people figured he was headed before "El Feroz" suffered knockout losses to Felix Trinidad and Oscar De La Hoya. While some critics think he was rushed into big fights before he was ready, it's beginning to look like Vargas is going to be one of those fighters who, while very good, will never be great. He scores high in every department (boxing skills, speed, punch, chin) but not as high as the elite. Ironically, the areas where he does measure up to the very best—heart and determination—are also the aspects of his game that placed him in harm's way in the two biggest fights of his career.

Grade: B

ACHIEVEMENT: Vargas won the IBF junior middleweight belt in only his 15th pro outing and quickly racked up five successful defenses before coming apart against Trinidad. He picked up the vacant WBA 154-pound belt two fights later, only to lose it to De La Hoya in his first defense. That's quite a lot to cram into only 24 bouts, and at only 25 years of age, he has time to accomplish more.

Grade: B

MARKETABILITY: Despite the assault conviction of a few years ago and the steroid scandal following the De La Hoya fight, Vargas still has a large and loyal fan base. And that's as it should be. Win or lose, his fights are unfailingly fun to watch, mainly because he puts his heart and soul into it every time out. Though he can get salty with his rivals, Vargas interacts very well with both his fans and the media, coming across as a genuinely nice and decent guy. He never went Hollywood like De La Hoya, and remains very much a man of the people, which, along with his contrite attitude, helped him overcome the bad publicity generated by his brushes with the law and the Nevada commission.

Grade: A-

SUPPORT SYSTEM: Trainer Eduardo Garcia was criticized after the De La Hoya loss for not giving Vargas any applicable advice between rounds. It's also been said that most of Garcia's fighters, including his son, former IBF 130-pound beltholder Roberto "Grandpa" Garcia, take too much punishment. Be that as it may, Vargas has remained loyal to the man who has also become his surrogate father, so don't expect any changes in the corner. Main Events has promoted Vargas with its usual professionalism, and has wisely opted to built him back up rather than go for the quick cash.

Grade: B

GROWTH POTENTIAL: As a highly bankable product, Vargas is not going to have any trouble staying busy and working his way back into the seven-figure bracket. And if De La Hoya were to move up to middleweight to challenge Bernard Hopkins, it's well within the realm of possibility that Vargas could eventually rule the junior middleweight class.

Grade: B

ALL STAR REPORT CARDS

Shane Mosley

38-2 (35)
with 1 no-contest

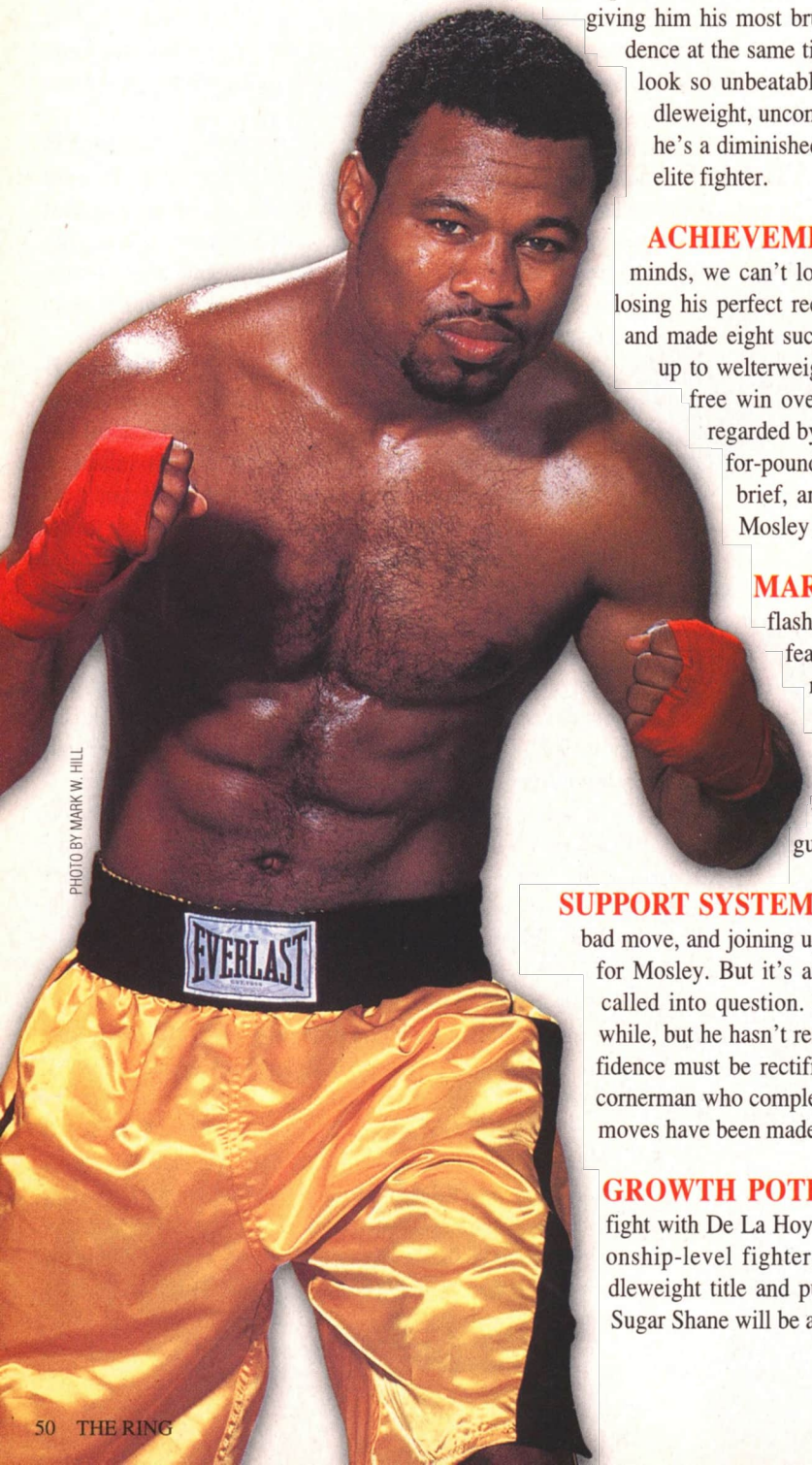

PHOTO BY MARK W. HILL

TALENT: If you'd asked us two years ago, we would've declared Mosley an A+ in less time than it takes Sugar Shane to deliver a five-punch combination. But all talent eventually erodes or gets exposed, and there may be a little of both at play with Mosley. Vernon Forrest exposed the fact that the right fighter, with a strong jab and a strong clinch, can neutralize Mosley's hand speed. And in so doing, he probably accelerated the Californian's decline, giving him his most brutal physical beating and chipping away at his confidence at the same time. But many of the qualities that once made Mosley look so unbeatable are still intact. He's ultra-quick for a junior middleweight, uncommonly athletic, and a dangerous bodypuncher. Maybe he's a diminished version of what he was at 28, but, at 31, he's still an elite fighter.

Grade: B+

ACHIEVEMENT: Though the Forrest fights are freshest in our minds, we can't lose sight of what Sugar Shane accomplished prior to losing his perfect record. He held the IBF lightweight title for two years and made eight successful defenses, all ending in knockouts. He moved up to welterweight and became the only man to score a controversy-free win over Oscar De La Hoya. And for a brief spell, he was regarded by many experts as the best fighter in the world, pound-for-pound. The flipside is that his time at the top was somewhat brief, and De La Hoya is the only great fighter over whom Mosley holds a win.

Grade: A-

MARKETABILITY: Mosley seemed to have it all—a flashy, exciting style, a million-dollar smile, and an undefeated record—yet HBO couldn't quite seem to make a major drawing card out of him. Now that the undefeated record is gone and the smile is starting to feel phony, crossover stardom is going to be all but impossible to achieve. But within the boxing universe, Sugar Shane is still an established name and a guy who won't struggle to land the fights he wants.

Grade: B

SUPPORT SYSTEM: Severing ties with marketing agency IMG wasn't a bad move, and joining up with new promoter Gary Shaw might work out well for Mosley. But it's after the bell rings that Mosley's personnel has to be called into question. His father, Jack Mosley, did an excellent job for a while, but he hasn't responded well to adversity, and his son's flagging confidence must be rectified before the De La Hoya rematch. Adding another cornerman who complements Papa Mosley has been discussed, but as yet, no moves have been made.

Grade: B-

GROWTH POTENTIAL: Everything hinges on the September 13 fight with De La Hoya. A loss may signal the end for Mosley as a championship-level fighter, whereas a win earns him the world junior middleweight title and puts him back in the spotlight. Based on recent form, Sugar Shane will be an underdog.

Grade: B

ALL STAR REPORT CARDS

Ricardo Mayorga

24-3-1 (22)
with 1 no-contest

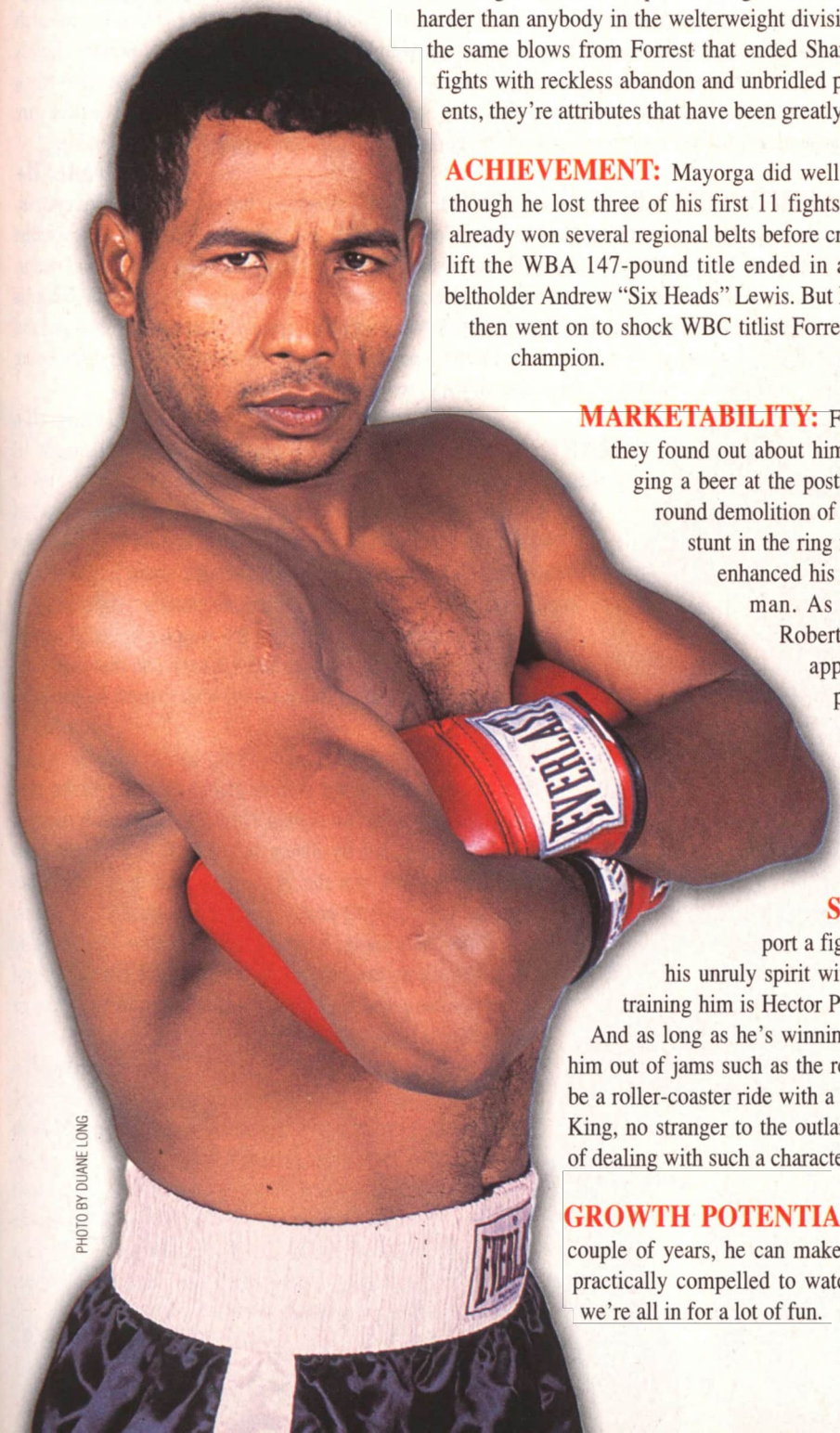

PHOTO BY DUANE LONG

TALENT: We won't know exactly how talented Mayorga is until after his July 12 rematch with Vernon Forrest, and more than perhaps any fighter under discussion here, his grades are really incomplete. This may skew his marks higher than they might turn out to be in the long run, but a couple of things are already obvious: He's fearless, hits as hard or harder than anybody in the welterweight division, and has a chin capable of withstanding the same blows from Forrest that ended Shane Mosley's reign at 147 pounds. He also fights with reckless abandon and unbridled passion. While these are not technically talents, they're attributes that have been greatly responsible for his success.

Grade: B+

ACHIEVEMENT: Mayorga did well on the Latin American circuit, and even though he lost three of his first 11 fights, he's been unbeaten since 1998 and had already won several regional belts before crashing the U.S. market. His first attempt to lift the WBA 147-pound title ended in an inconclusive cut-eye no-contest with beltholder Andrew "Six Heads" Lewis. But Mayorga savaged Lewis in the rematch and then went on to shock WBC titlist Forrest to win THE RING's recognition as world champion.

Grade: A-

MARKETABILITY: Fans fell in love with Mayorga the second they found out about him lighting up a victory cigarette and chugging a beer at the postfight press conference, following his fifth-round demolition of Lewis. And when he repeated the smoking stunt in the ring moments after his upset kayo of Forrest, it enhanced his growing reputation as boxing's latest wild man. As fistic rogues from John L. Sullivan to Roberto Duran have proved, there's nothing as appealing to the masses as a guy who can party as hard as he can fight. How long Mayorga, who was recently arrested for street racing in Nicaragua, can stay out of trouble and keep winning is anybody's guess. But as long as he can, it promises be a sensational ride.

Grade: A-

SUPPORT SYSTEM: You don't support a fighter like Mayorga; you struggle to contain his unruly spirit without breaking it. The man responsible for training him is Hector Perez, who has done an excellent job so far. And as long as he's winning, there will be money for lawyers to bail him out of jams such as the recent racing beef. But it's always going to be a roller-coaster ride with a guy like Mayorga, and even promoter Don King, no stranger to the outlandish, seems a tad daunted at the prospect of dealing with such a character.

Grade: B

GROWTH POTENTIAL: If Mayorga can hold it together for a couple of years, he can make millions. He's the kind of fighter you're practically compelled to watch, and if he beats Forrest a second time, we're all in for a lot of fun.

Grade: A-

ALL STAR REPORT CARDS

Vernon Forrest

35-1 (26)
with 1 no-contest

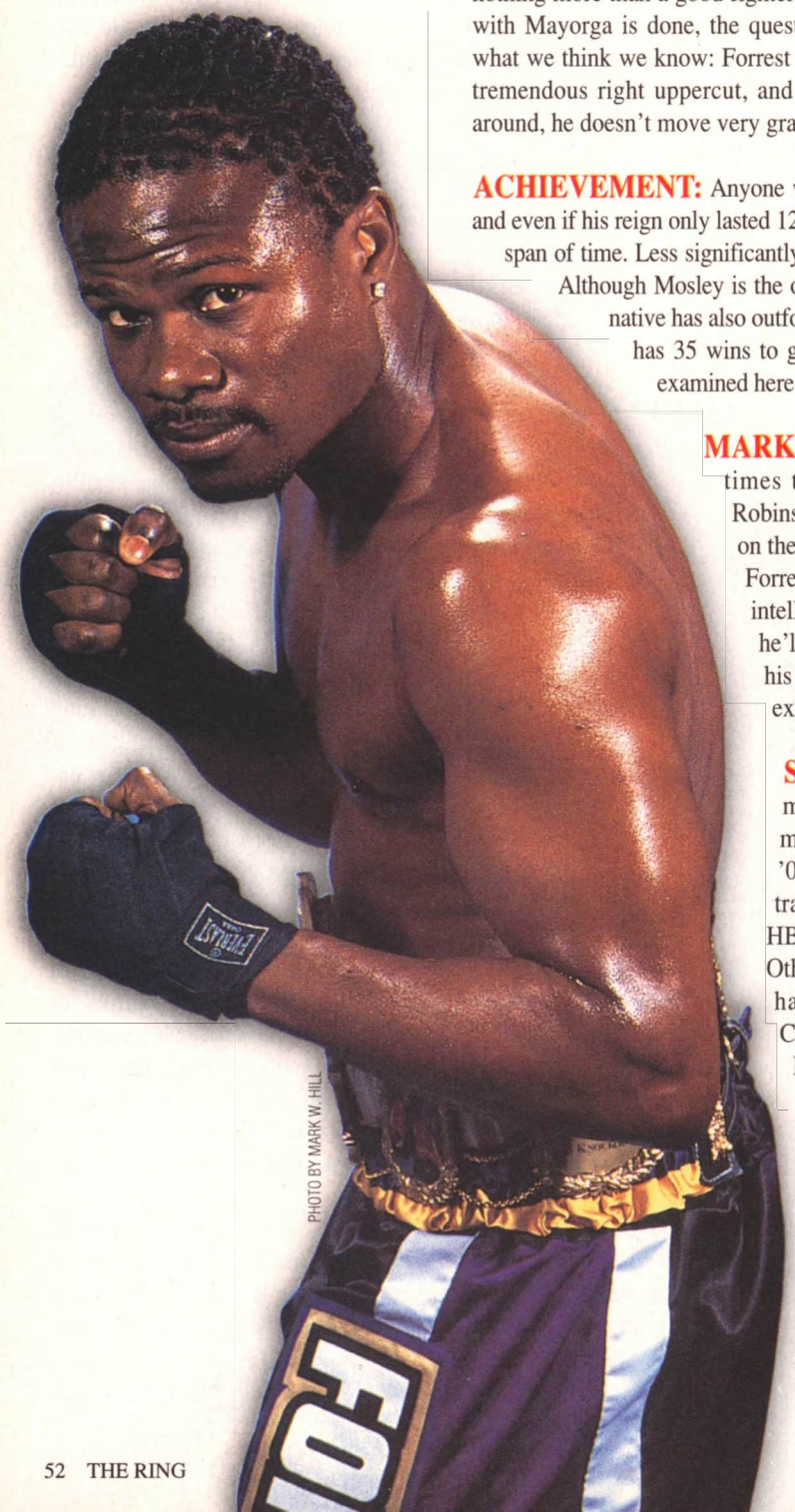

PHOTO BY MARK W. HILL

TALENT: Even though Forrest bumped off THE RING's pound-for-pound king, Shane Mosley, in January '02, there was reluctance throughout the boxing community to elevate him to Mosley's former spot. Now that Forrest has in turn been flattened by Ricardo Mayorga, it's clear that our reluctance was justified. How talented is Forrest really? Is he nothing more than a good fighter who has another good fighter's number? Until his rematch with Mayorga is done, the questions will outweigh the answers. For now, though, here's what we think we know: Forrest is skilled and powerful, with long arms, an effective jab, a tremendous right uppercut, and a booming overhand right. But he's not the fastest guy around, he doesn't move very gracefully, and his ability to take a punch is questionable.

Grade: B+

ACHIEVEMENT: Anyone who becomes a RING champion has done something special, and even if his reign only lasted 12 months, Forrest was the true top dog at welterweight for that span of time. Less significantly, he has also held both the IBF and WBC 147-pound straps. Although Mosley is the only superstar he's beaten—twice, don't forget—the Georgia native has also outfought the likes of Vince Phillips and Santiago Samaniego, and has 35 wins to go with his lone defeat. As with all of the categories being examined here, the Mayorga rematch looms large over his grade.

Grade: B+

MARKETABILITY: There's a reason Michael Jordan got 10 times the fanfare on his farewell tour this season as David Robinson got on his. The workmanlike nice guy just never catches on the way the flashy, charismatic guy does, and unfortunately for Forrest, there's nothing flashy or charismatic about him. He's an intelligent, pleasant guy and a skilled, accomplished fighter, but he'll never be an attraction fighting the way he fights. Many of his fights are downright boring, and the only one that was truly exhilarating from start to finish ended with Forrest kayoed.

Grade: C

SUPPORT SYSTEM: Working independently of any major promoters, Forrest was in effect agreeing to be promoted by HBO when he signed a six-fight deal with them in '02, but he blew that by losing in the first bout of the contract. If he doesn't win the Mayorga rematch, you can bet HBO won't be there to console Forrest with further offers. Others in Forrest's camp, however, will be more loyal, and he has an excellent management team of Al Hayman and Charles Watson and an equally efficient training team of Ronnie Shields and Al Mitchell.

Grade: B+

GROWTH POTENTIAL: Although he's 32 years old, Forrest probably has some good years left in him, and if he should defeat Mayorga, there are marquee opponents everywhere he looks. From Kostya Tszyu to Fernando Vargas to Bernard Hopkins to the ultimate prize, Oscar De La Hoya, Forrest fights in a weight range chock full of challenges. But he has to get by Mayorga first to make us believe he's up to them.

Grade: B-

ALL STAR REPORT CARDS

Kostya Tszyu

30-1 (24)
with 1 no-contest

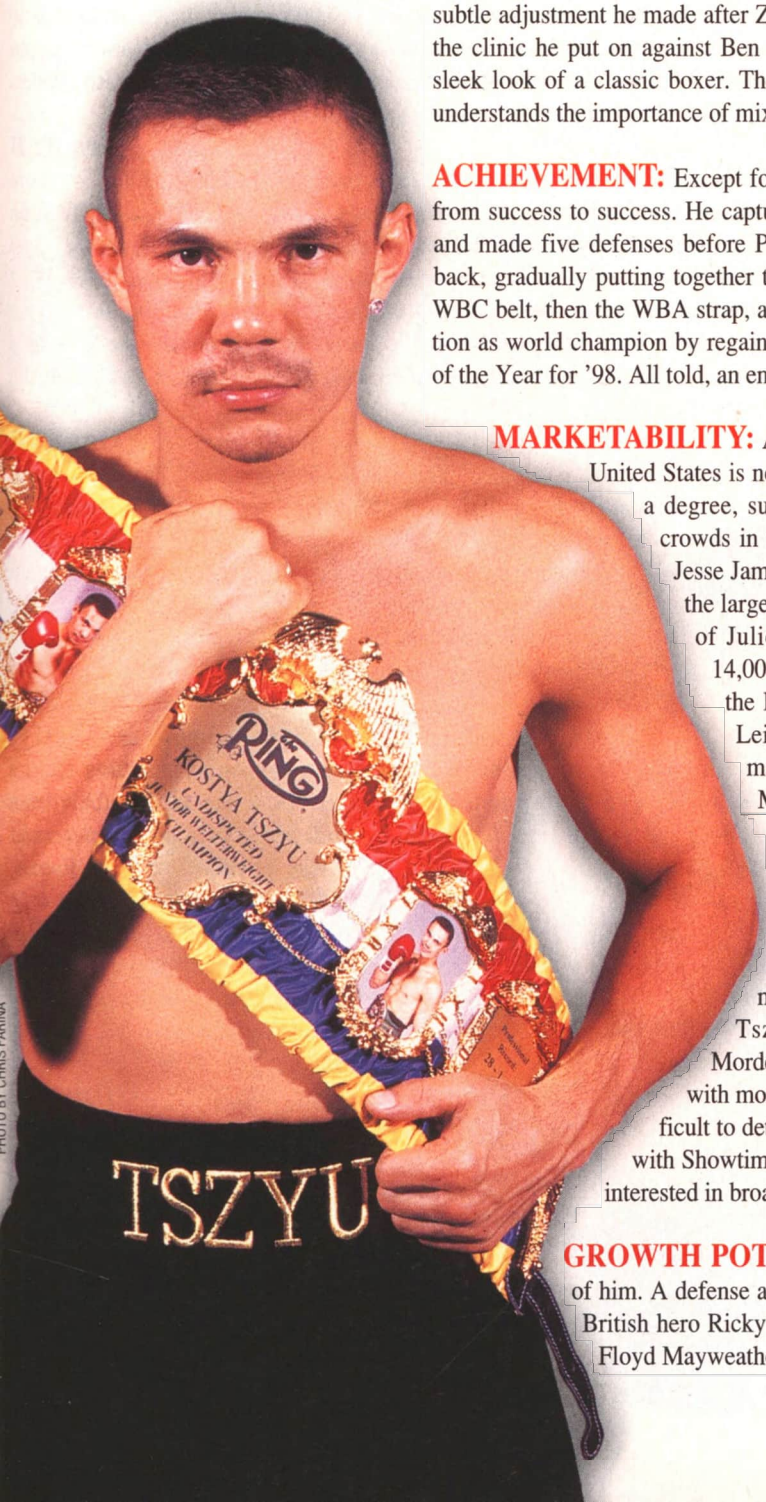

PHOTO BY CHRIS FARINA

TALENT: Tszyu is the finest product of the old Soviet amateur system, which is saying quite a lot when you consider how well the former Soviet bloc teams fared in international competition. Throughout much of his pro career Tszyu was so dominant his boxing proficiency was often overlooked, but as the years went by and the victories mounted, it became obvious that strength and punching power were far from his only attributes. Remember the subtle adjustment he made after Zab Judah staggered him in the first round? And how about the clinic he put on against Ben Tackie? Don't be fooled because Tszyu doesn't have the sleek look of a classic boxer. The junior welterweight champion is a thinking fighter who understands the importance of mixing brains and brawn.

Grade: A

ACHIEVEMENT: Except for his TKO loss to Vince Phillips in 1997, Tszyu has gone from success to success. He captured his first belt (IBF junior welter) in his 14th pro bout, and made five defenses before Phillips ambushed him. Undaunted, Tszyu fought his way back, gradually putting together the pieces of the 140-pound title. First, he won the vacant WBC belt, then the WBA strap, and finally unified the title and gained THE RING's recognition as world champion by regaining the IBF crown. He also earned THE RING's Comeback of the Year for '98. All told, an enviable resume.

Grade: A

MARKETABILITY: A Russian immigrant living in Australia and fighting in the United States is not the best recipe for box-office success, and Tszyu has, to a degree, suffered because of it. His fights have seldom drawn big crowds in the U.S., and prior to the recent success of his fight with Jesse James Leija in Australia, which drew in excess of 28,000 fans, the largest turnout for one of his fights was the July 2000 beatdown of Julio Cesar Chavez in Phoenix, Arizona, and most of the 14,000 on hand were there to root for the Mexican icon. Despite the large turnout Down Under for the homecoming fight with Leija, it's seemingly not a market he can tap too often, as manager Vlad Warton is trying to stage Tszyu's next fight in Moscow.

Grade: B

SUPPORT SYSTEM: From the start of his career Tszyu has had the benefit of being trained by Johnny Lewis, who previously handled Jeff Fenech and is generally considered Australia's top trainer. The management/promotional picture has developed into a financial quagmire. Tszyu broke a contract with his original promoter, Bill Mordey, and lost a court case that has already cost him millions, with more still to pay. Who's to blame for this sorry situation is difficult to determine, but it's Tszyu who's paying the price. His contract with Showtime has been beneficial over the years, but the network is not interested in broadcasting unattractive mandatories.

Grade: B

GROWTH POTENTIAL: Tszyu's biggest paydays could still be ahead of him. A defense against Arturo Gatti would be huge, as would a match with British hero Ricky Hatton. There's also a possibility of a lucrative bout with Floyd Mayweather and a rematch with Judah.

Grade: B+

ALL STAR REPORT CARDS

Arturo Gatti

35-6 (28)

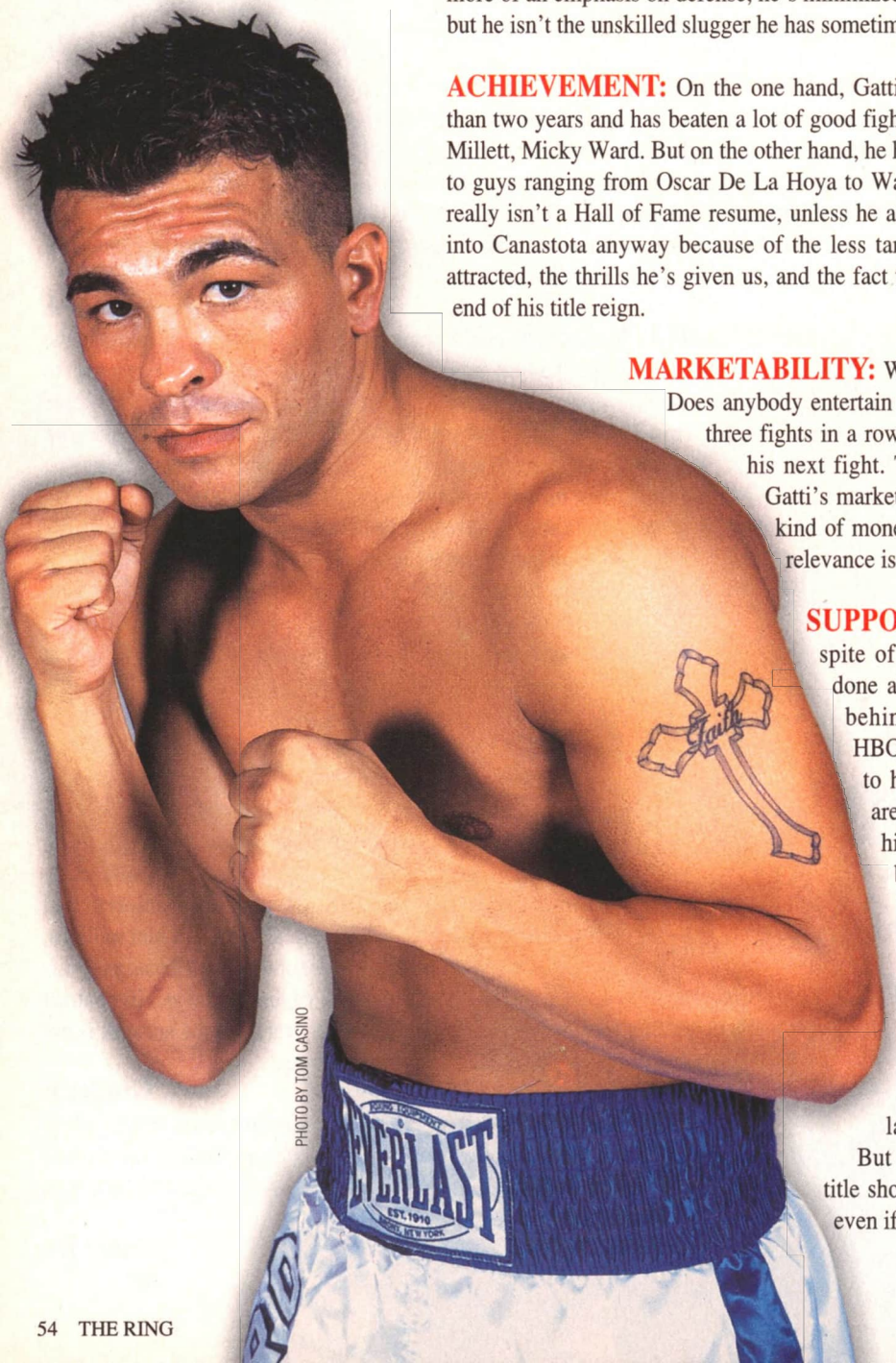

PHOTO BY TOM CASINO

TALENT: As far as creating drama is concerned, Gatti is the greatest talent since Shakespeare. But that's not the sort of talent we're talking about here. We're talking about the sort of talent that helps keep a fighter out of such drama, and Gatti, though improved, is still lacking in some of those areas. He *can* box well, but he doesn't always put his skills to optimum use. He has shown devastating punching prowess, but it hasn't been there consistently as he's moved up and down the weight scale. He's been cursed with skin that tends to swell or tear open, but since taking better care of himself between fights and learning to put more of an emphasis on defense, he's minimized that problem. Basically, he's no Roy Jones, but he isn't the unskilled slugger he has sometimes made himself out to be either.

Grade: B

ACHIEVEMENT: On the one hand, Gatti held a major title at 130 pounds for more than two years and has beaten a lot of good fighters: Tracy Patterson, Gabe Ruelas, Terronn Millett, Micky Ward. But on the other hand, he hasn't beaten any great fighters, and he's lost to guys ranging from Oscar De La Hoya to Ward to Angel Manfredy to Ivan Robinson. It really isn't a Hall of Fame resume, unless he adds another title reign to it. But he may get into Canastota anyway because of the less tangible things he's achieved—the fans he's attracted, the thrills he's given us, and the fact that he's still a superstar five years after the end of his title reign.

Grade: B

MARKETABILITY: Why do we watch boxing? To be entertained. Does anybody entertain us more than Gatti? No way. When he lost three fights in a row in '98, HBO welcomed him right back for his next fight. That tells you all you need to know about Gatti's marketability. For a non-heavyweight to make the kind of money he has for fights with so little world-title relevance is flat-out remarkable.

Grade: A

SUPPORT SYSTEM: Being so successful in spite of his shortcomings isn't something Gatti's done all by himself. He's had an incredible team behind him, from his unofficial promoters at HBO, to his official promoters at Main Events, to his dedicated manager Pat Lynch. The only area in which he has sometimes been lacking is his trainer, but new coach Buddy McGirt has been perfect for Gatti, convincing him to fight more intelligently than his previous trainers could.

Grade: A+

GROWTH POTENTIAL: If you'd have told us four years ago that Gatti would still be fighting—much less possessing growth potential—we'd have laughed until our eyelids started bleeding. But the reality is that superfights and possible title shots are out there for the 31-year-old slugger, even if he loses the rubber match with Ward.

Grade: A

ALL STAR REPORT CARDS

Floyd Mayweather

30-0 (20)

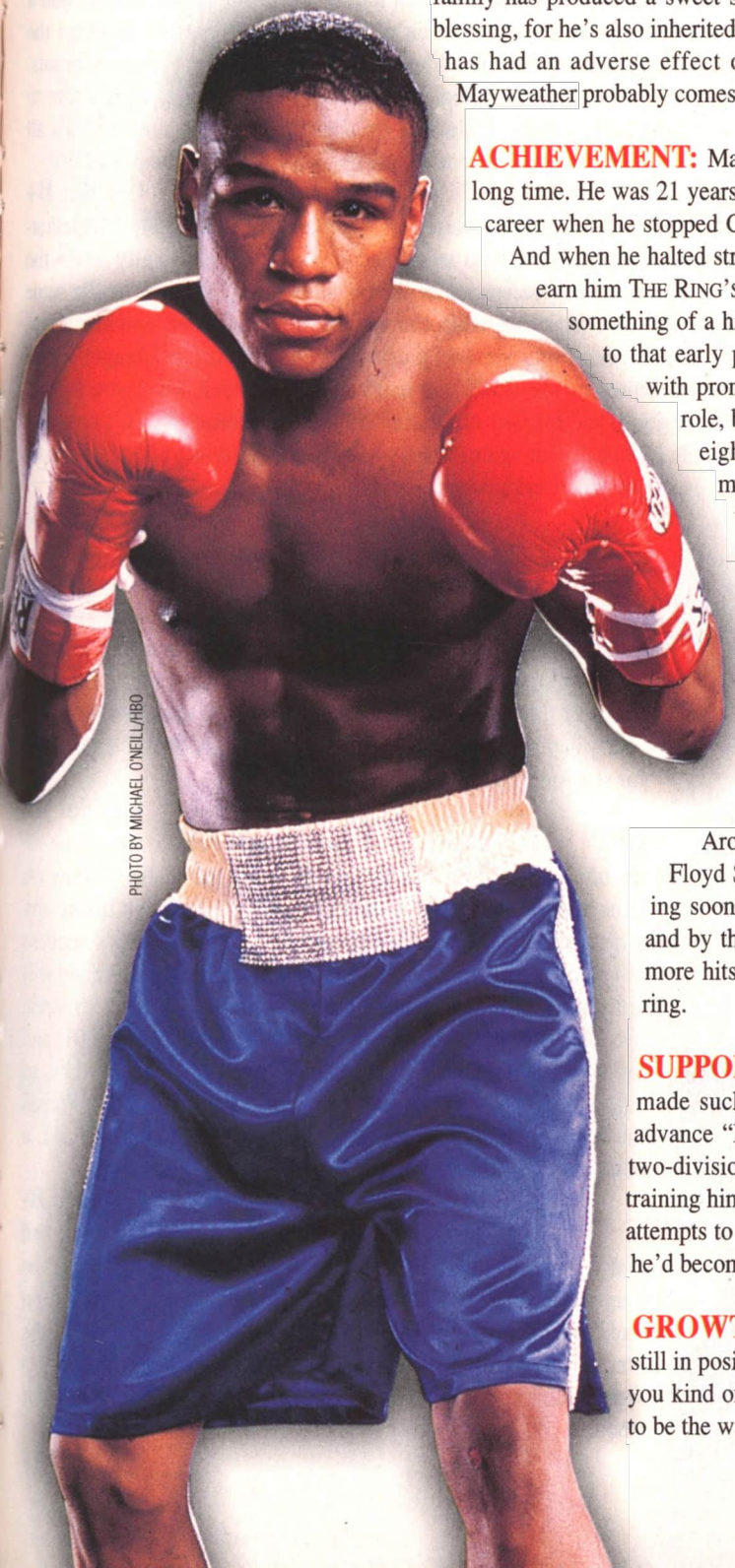

PHOTO BY MICHAEL O'NEILL/HBO

TALENT: It's impossible to know how much of Mayweather's breathtaking boxing ability is genetic and how much is environmental. But being born into the fighting Mayweather family has produced a sweet scientist of the highest order. It has, however, been a mixed blessing, for he's also inherited the contentious Mayweather personality, a character trait that has had an adverse effect on his career. But when it comes to pure boxing talent, Mayweather probably comes closer to Roy Jones than any other active fighter.

Grade: A

ACHIEVEMENT: Mayweather was as close to a prodigy as boxing has seen in a long time. He was 21 years old (but looked even younger) and just 18 fights into his pro career when he stopped Genaro Hernandez to win the WBC super featherweight title. And when he halted streaking Angel Manfredy in his first defense, it was enough to earn him THE RING's 1998 Fighter of the Year award. Oddly enough, '98 remains something of a high-water mark for Mayweather, as he's never quite lived up to that early promise of unlimited brilliance. Brittle hands, disagreements with promoter Bob Arum, and an assault conviction have all played a role, but that doesn't mean he hasn't still accomplished a lot. After eight successful defenses of the 130-pound belt, Mayweather moved to 135 pounds and beat Jose Luis Castillo to claim the vacant lightweight championship, which he has now defended twice.

Grade: A

MARKETABILITY: At first, it looked like Mayweather was the total package. A boyishly handsome face and a bright smile enhanced his awesome talent. The media loved him and the fans were catching on fast. But it wasn't long before the turbulence inside bubbled to the surface. One of the first public flashpoints came when he termed his lucrative deal with HBO a "slave contract." Around the same time, he also fired his father/trainer/manager, Floyd Sr., and kicked him out of his house. Bitching and complaining soon became the main topic of Mayweather's public statements, and by the time he was convicted of assault, his image had taken far more hits in the court of public opinion than he ever had in a boxing ring.

Grade: B-

SUPPORT SYSTEM: Manager James Prince, the rap mogul who made such a splash when he signed Mayweather, has done little to advance "Pretty Boy's" career or improve his image. Uncle Roger, a two-division former titleholder, seems to be doing an adequate job of training him, but Arum and HBO have been pretty much stymied in their attempts to build Mayweather into the sort of superstar so many thought he'd become after such a sensational start.

Grade: B-

GROWTH POTENTIAL: Mayweather's still undefeated and still in position to make a lot of money. But while nothing is impossible, you kind of know already that with Mayweather things are never going to be the way they should have been.

Grade: B

ALL STAR REPORT CARDS

Acelino Freitas

33-0 (30)

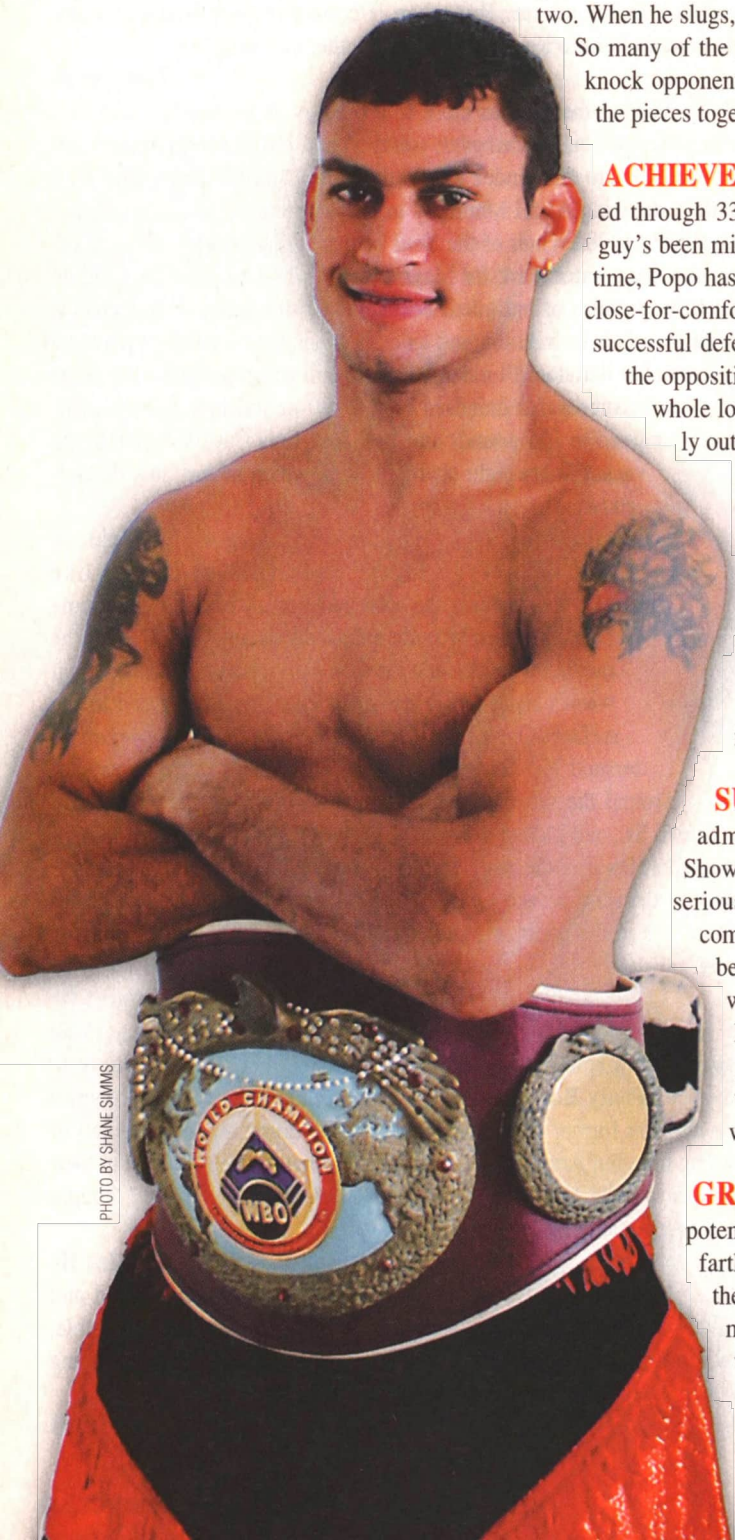

PHOTO BY SHANE SIMMS

TALENT: The tricky thing about assessing Freitas' talent is that, at age 27, "Popo" is still trying to figure out how he wants to put that talent to use. Is he a boxer or a slugger? Freitas seems as unsure as the rest of us. But as best we can tell, he's a tremendous puncher and a deft, capable boxer who would like to be a little bit of both but can't seem to integrate the two. When he slugs, he has no defense. When he boxes, he can't produce knockouts. So many of the pieces are in place—especially that rare gift that allows him to knock opponents silly with a single shot from either side—but until he puts all the pieces together, Freitas will remain just outside the pound-for-pound list.

Grade: B+

ACHIEVEMENT: You have to say this much for Freitas: He's undefeated through 33 fights. That's no small accomplishment, especially when the guy's been mixing with decent junior lightweights since 1999. But at the same time, Popo has only faced one other championship-level fighter, winning a too-close-for-comfort decision over Joel Casamayor. The Brazilian slugger's nine successful defenses of the WBO belt don't count for much when you look at the opposition, and his two successful WBA title defenses haven't proven a whole lot either. But again, when you're 33-0, the praise should definitely outweigh the criticism.

Grade: B-

MARKETABILITY: Knockout artists are usually easy to promote, especially when they're born with knockout looks as well. The handsome Freitas, then, should be a promoter's dream, and to an extent he has been. But he hasn't touched the mainstream yet, due to a combination of factors: He hasn't fought a marquee opponent, he isn't ending every fight early anymore, and he doesn't speak English. Still, the potential for stardom is undeniable.

Grade: B+

SUPPORT SYSTEM: Promoter Art Pelullo has done an admirable job guiding Freitas, as he's appeared five times on Showtime and once on HBO in the last three years without taking any serious risks other than the Casamayor fight. The big tests need to come soon, though, or else the criticism of Pelullo and Freitas will begin to build. Already there's been criticism of Oscar Suarez, who took over for Luiz Doria as Freitas' trainer in mid-2001, and led a guy who had scored 29 knockouts in his first 29 fights to just one knockout in his last four. One member of Team Freitas whom we definitely won't criticize is his lovely wife Eliana, a welcome sight at every Popo fight.

Grade: B-

GROWTH POTENTIAL: As there is so much untapped potential with Freitas at this still-early stage of his career, he may be farther from his ceiling than any other fighter being analyzed on these pages. But by the same token, he may totally fall apart the moment he steps in with a top-flight opponent, such as lightweight champ Floyd Mayweather. Hopefully, we'll find out soon.

Grade: A-

ALL STAR REPORT CARDS

Marco Antonio Barrera

57-3 (40)

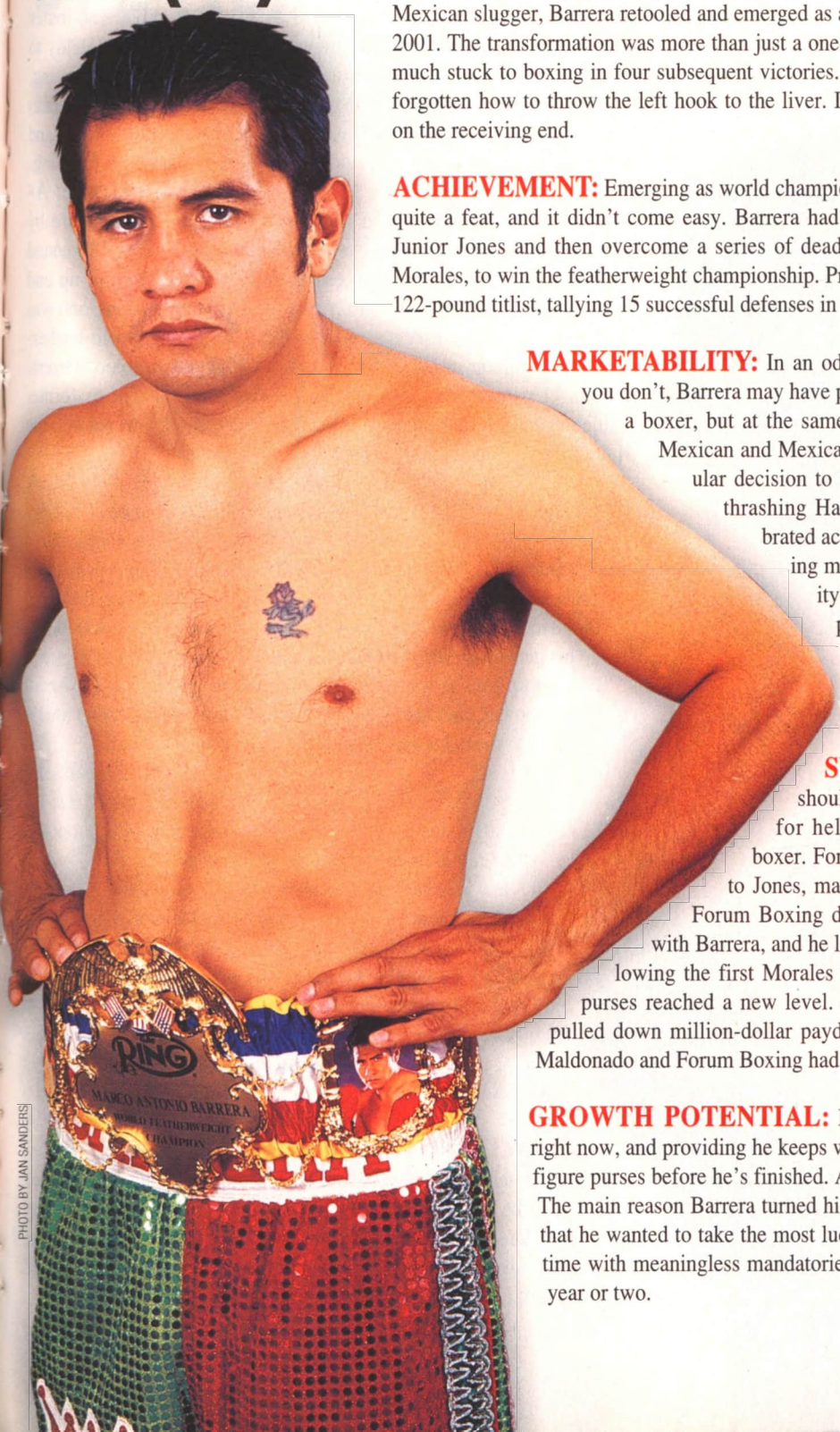

PHOTO BY JAN SANDERS

TALENT: It's rare indeed that a fighter, particularly a very successful one, can reinvent himself in his 13th year as a professional. But after years as a wade-in-and-throw-the-hook Mexican slugger, Barrera retooled and emerged as a savvy boxer to upset Naseem Hamed in 2001. The transformation was more than just a one-shot deal to beat Naz; Barrera has pretty much stuck to boxing in four subsequent victories. But don't think for one second that he's forgotten how to throw the left hook to the liver. It's still a thing of beauty—unless you're on the receiving end.

Grade: A

ACHIEVEMENT: Emerging as world champion in one of boxing's deepest divisions is quite a feat, and it didn't come easy. Barrera had to rebound from back-to-back losses to Junior Jones and then overcome a series of deadly opponents, including arch-rival Erik Morales, to win the featherweight championship. Prior to that, he had a lengthy run as WBO 122-pound titlist, tallying 15 successful defenses in two reigns.

Grade: A

MARKETABILITY: In an odd case of damned if you do, damned if you don't, Barrera may have prolonged his stay at the top by becoming a boxer, but at the same time hurt himself with the millions of Mexican and Mexican-American fans. After losing an unpopular decision to Morales in their majestic first fight and thrashing Hamed, Barrera was Mexico's most celebrated active fighter. But when he stayed in a boxing mode for the Morales rematch his popularity slipped a bit, not so much because a lot people thought the judges got it wrong again, but because Barrera violated the macho code of conduct that endears Mexican fighters to their countrymen.

Grade: B+

SUPPORT SYSTEM: Mucho credit should go to career-long trainer Rudy Perez for helping Barrera convert from banger to boxer. For a few years following the double defeat to Jones, manager Ricardo Maldonado and promoter Forum Boxing didn't seem to know exactly what to do with Barrera, and he languished in insignificant fights. But following the first Morales fight, his career took off again, and his purses reached a new level. For his two most recent fights, Barrera pulled down million-dollar paydays for easy fights. You have to figure Maldonado and Forum Boxing had something to do with that.

Grade: A-

GROWTH POTENTIAL: Barrera is at the pinnacle of his career right now, and providing he keeps winning, he's looking at several more six-figure purses before he's finished. And that might not be too long from now. The main reason Barrera turned his back on the alphabet organizations was that he wanted to take the most lucrative fights available, rather than waste time with meaningless mandatories. Look for him to retire within the next year or two.

Grade: B+

ALL STAR REPORT CARDS

Erik Morales

44-1 (33)

TALENT: Born in an apartment below a boxing gym in Tijuana, Morales went almost straight from the crib to the ring and never looked back. He started boxing at age six and turned pro at 16, and now at age 26, he's just about perfected a style that combines attributes of the stereotypical Mexican slugger and the graceful, fluid boxer. Armed with the ability to do damage with nearly every punch in the book, to be equally effective leading or countering, and to take whatever the opponent can dish out thanks to a jaw as sturdy as it is square, Morales is nearly the complete package. If his hands were a little faster and his defense more consistent, it would be hard to imagine him ever losing.

Grade: A-

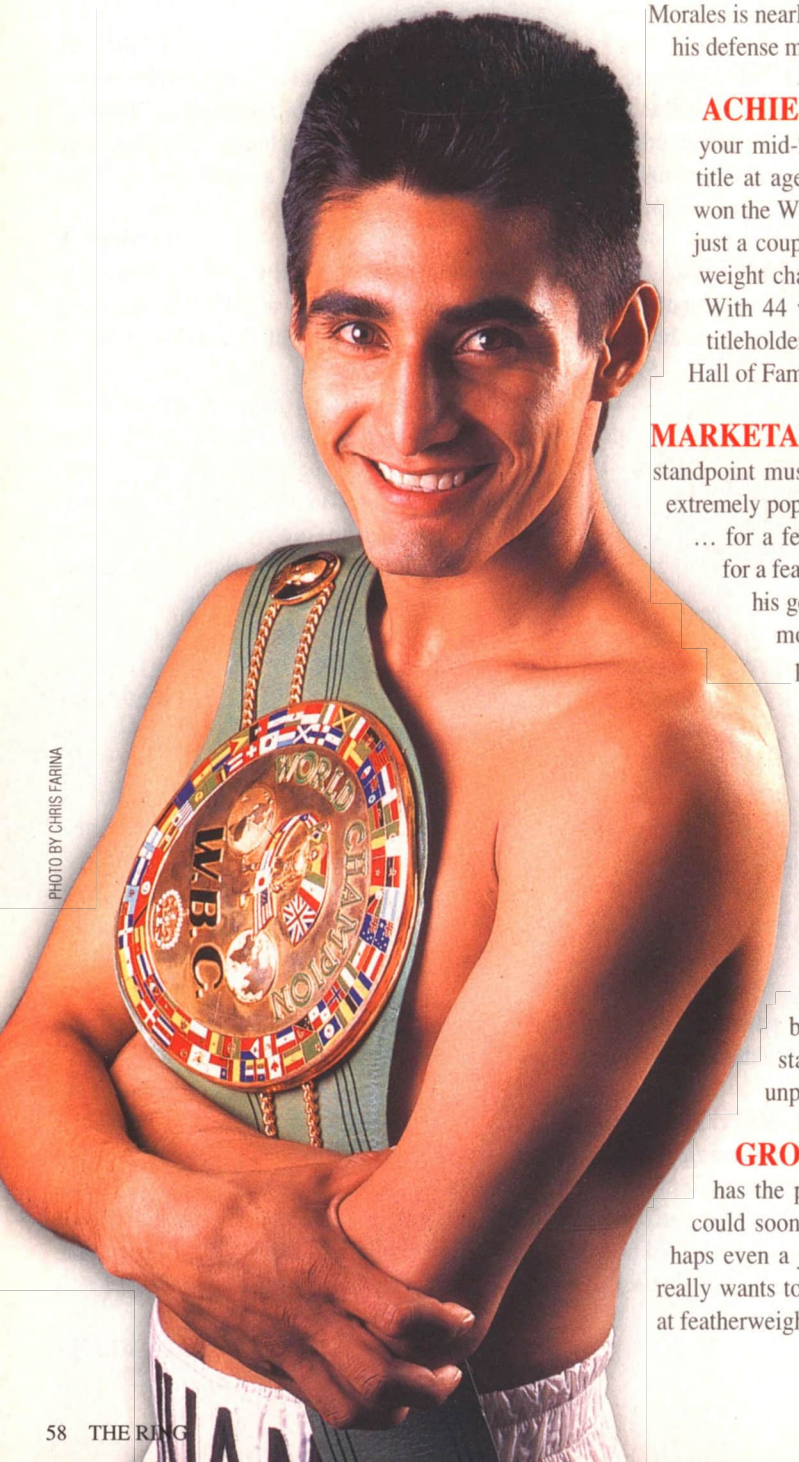

PHOTO BY CHRIS FARINA

ACHIEVEMENT: You can't accomplish too much more by your mid-20s than "El Terrible" has. He won the WBC 122-pound title at age 21, made nine successful defenses of it, moved up and won the WBC featherweight strap on two separate occasions, and was just a couple of controversial points shy of becoming world featherweight champion in his 2002 rematch with Marco Antonio Barrera. With 44 wins in 45 fights, including nine over current or former titleholders, Morales might already have done enough to get into the Hall of Fame—and his career may only be half over.

Grade: A

MARKETABILITY: Everything Morales does from a money-making standpoint must be qualified by three words: *for a featherweight*. He's extremely popular … for a featherweight. He earns tremendous paychecks … for a featherweight. His pay-per-view numbers are sensational … for a featherweight. There's nothing Morales can do, however, about his genetic limitations. The only area he can improve on to reach more fans is mastering the English language, but his heart, power, and always-exciting style have spoken more loudly to the ticket-buying public than any words could.

Grade: B+

SUPPORT SYSTEM: Aside from the fact that his father, Jose Morales Damian, was once highly opposed to the idea of his son becoming a professional fighter, Morales has had a focused, supportive team guiding him throughout his career. Team Morales has been consistent over the years, with dad Jose as the head trainer, the savvy Fernando Beltran as the manager, and Bob Arum as the promoter. For Hispanic fighters looking to make it big, Arum has proven himself to be the go-to guy, and his stable of attractive opponents in Morales' weight range is unparalleled.

Grade: A

GROWTH POTENTIAL: Taken quite literally, Morales has the potential to grow into a bigger-money fighter because he could soon be a junior lightweight and then a lightweight, and perhaps even a junior welter by the time his career is through. But if he really wants to reach the next level of stardom, he needs to stick around at featherweight long enough to beat Barrera in a rubber match.

Grade: A-

ALL STAR REPORT CARDS

Paulie Ayala

34-2 (12)

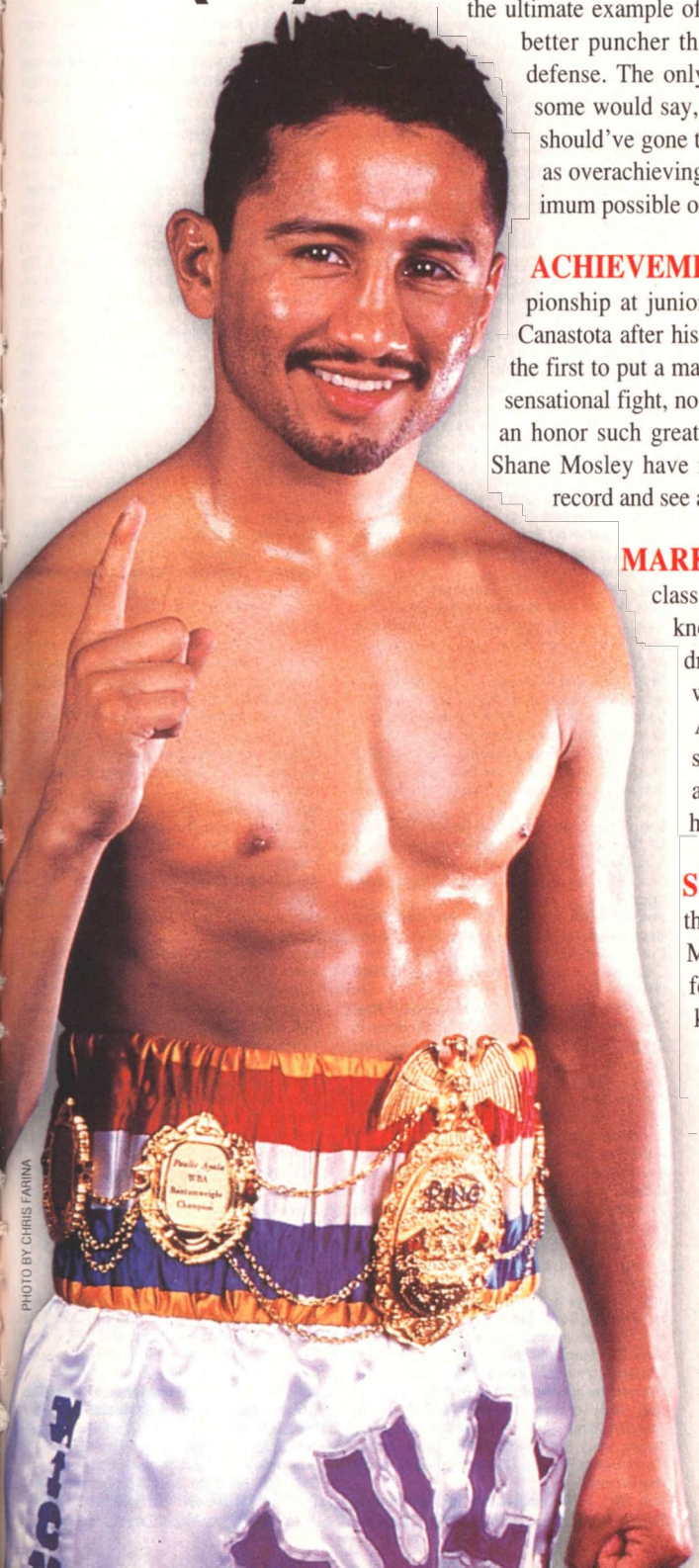

PHOTO BY CHRIS FARINA

TALENT: When people toss around that cliche about athletes who aren't great at any one thing, but are good at everything, they may as well toss it in Ayala's direction, because he's the ultimate example of that attribute. He's fairly quick, fundamentally sound, a slightly better puncher than his kayo rate indicates, well-conditioned, and adequate on defense. The only qualities he really has in abundance are desire and chin (and, some would say, luck, which has helped Ayala win several fights that could've or should've gone the other way). Jim Lampley likes to say that there's no such thing as overachieving, but certainly Ayala has not underachieved. He's gotten the maximum possible out of the gifts he was born with.

Grade: B

ACHIEVEMENT: With titles in two weight divisions, including a RING championship at junior featherweight, Ayala has made a borderline case for a trip to Canastota after his career ends. Two things he has working in his favor: He became the first to put a mark in the loss column on the lengthy resume of Johnny Tapia (in a sensational fight, no less) and in 1999 he was named Fighter of the Year by THE RING, an honor such great contemporaries as Lennox Lewis, Marco Antonio Barrera, and Shane Mosley have never earned. Working against Ayala: Most experts look at his record and see a win or two that they consider a loss.

Grade: B+

MARKETABILITY: Although he fights in a relatively small weight class, never says anything remotely controversial, and hasn't scored a knockout in almost five years, Ayala has developed into a reliable drawing card in both Las Vegas, where Mandalay Bay is in love with him, and his home state of Texas. It's no big mystery why: Ayala is never in a boring fight, and he's a Hispanic fighter who speaks English. He'll never be a mainstream star because of size and talent limitations, but for a little guy, he's done just fine for himself.

Grade: B

SUPPORT SYSTEM: Fittingly for the uncontroversial Ayala, there hasn't been a hint of turmoil in his entourage, as trainer Henry Mendez and manager Scott Sherman have been with the junior feather champ for years and have done an outstanding job. The key, however, to making Ayala rich has been promoter Bob Arum, who's made Paulie a three-time pay-per-view headliner. And it's never hurt Ayala having Arum in his corner when it's time to tally up the scorecards.

Grade: A

GROWTH POTENTIAL: At age 33, and with a lot of tough fights under his belt, it's hard to envision Ayala's career advancing much at this point. But as long as he learns from the beating he took from Erik Morales and stays away from the featherweight division, he could have a few more profitable years in the fight game. Between Manny Pacquiao, Tim Austin, Oscar Larios, and Wayne McCullough, there are definitely opponents against whom he can make money without going above 122 pounds.

Grade: B-

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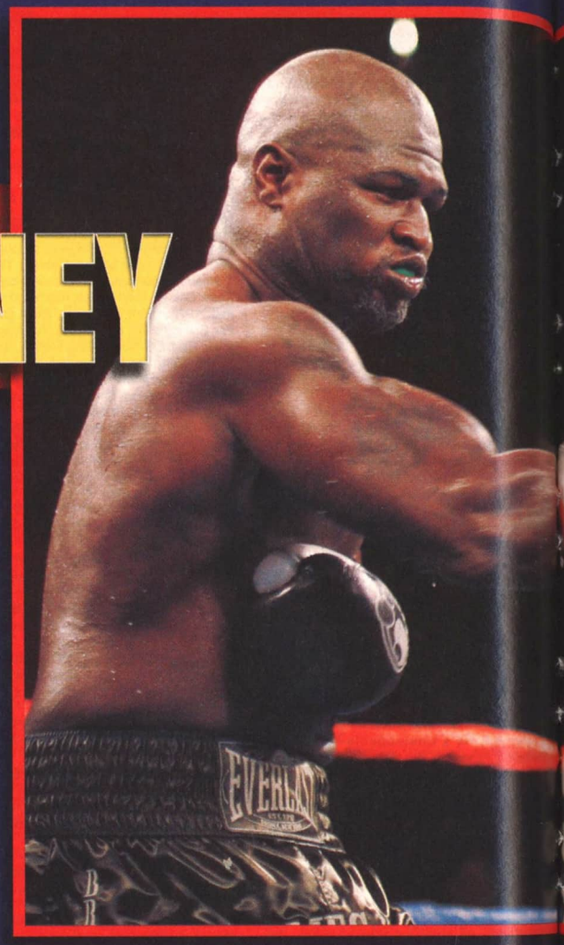
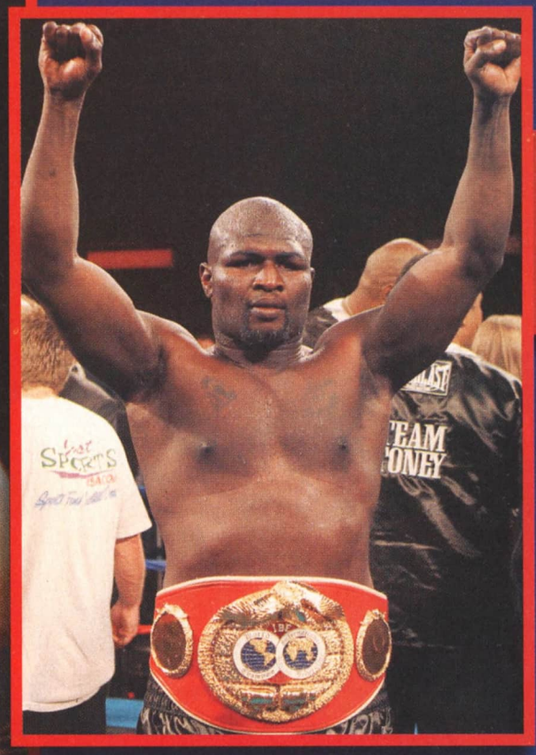
The Spotlight Shines On "Lights Out"

JAMES TONEY MAKES IT WORTH THE WEIGHT





Toney punched his way back to the top after almost a decade in limbo, using precisions counters (left) to pound out a thrilling 12-round decision over the hard-charging Jirov and win the IBF cruiserweight belt (above).

By Ted Bodenrader

PHOTOS BY TOM CASINO

Fifteen minutes after the judges declared him the unanimous winner, James Toney remained standing in the middle of the ring, the brilliant theater lights raining down upon his hardened face. His arms were outstretched to the ceiling, holding a piece of alphabet hardware that was more representative of a personal redemption than any type of status within the International Boxing Federation.

"It feels great to be a champion again," said Toney, his trademark scowl disappearing for a Kodak moment. "It's been a long time coming."

For the first six years of his pro career, no figure in boxing was more aptly nicknamed than the fighter known as "Lights Out." But since Roy Jones humbled him in November 1994, Toney had been in the kind of dark and lonely place where no boxer wants to dwell. Now he is once again beaming in the limelight.

"He overcame those seven, eight years where he was still winning but not achieving that greatness that he had in him," said Toney's promoter, Dan Goossen, in the immediate aftermath of Toney's 12-round decision over Vasiliy Jirov. "James was motivated and hungry for this win. He did exactly what we'd planned."

Earlier that night, the previously undefeated Jirov had entered the ring as an 8-5 favorite to successfully defend the IBF cruiser belt for a seventh time. But by the time "The Russian Tiger" picked himself up off the floor in the closing seconds of the fight, the 1996 Olympic champion was no longer the best the division had to offer. Moreover, due to the rousing nature of the fight, the 190-pound pack had escaped that same dark black hole that had engulfed Toney. Virtually everybody agreed that it was the early forerunner for Fight of the Year honors.

How ironic that it took a fighter scorned for squandering his talent to rejuvenate a weight division that had become almost irrelevant since its sole superstar, Evander Holyfield, abandoned it back in '88.

For almost a decade Toney's ring wars had become secondary to his battles with gluttony, with trouble, and with rage. By the time he dropped a decision to unheralded Drake Thadzi in '97, he'd been written off as another sad tale of wasted talent, a former pound-for-pound great now submerging over a lonely horizon.

Toney's hunger was abundant in those days, but not for foes in trunks and padded mitts. Toney's epic tilt with the scale became a hot topic, as he ballooned to as high as 260 pounds on several occasions.

Depression became his ultimate foe, and Toney battled it every day. After a split with manager Jackie Kallen, others close to him would follow suit. His wife divorced him. His family parted ways with him. It all manifested into an avalanche of anger, but Toney rarely took it out on his ring opponents. Instead, he took it out on himself.

"Everybody used to say, 'James, you're gonna do this or you're gonna do that'," recalled Toney. "They never asked 'What does James want?' Even though I'm a man, I always tried to make everybody else happy. Everybody but myself."

Still, Toney somehow lingered as an object of our interest despite his decline as a fighter, much the way Mike Tyson does. And when Toney emerged from a two-year hiatus from boxing in 1999, he periodically showed flashes of his former, bad-ass self. With a new woman (his fiancee Angie) and four young children to feed, the career of the Michigan native was sporting new flickers of promise.

But his 10-fight win steak against a series of midrange opponents was not enough to persuade us of a full-scale rehabilitation. More convincing was that during the months leading up to the showdown with Jirov, Toney brushed through the doors of Freddie Roach's Wild Card Gym with uncommon regularity.

Whereas in the past Toney would revert to desperate, last-minute purging in order to make weight and shed the jelly in his belly, there were no such concerns this go-round. Toney never topped 204 pounds throughout the entire camp, even after Jirov pulled out of the original January date with a rib injury, a ploy that many suspected was designed to lure Toney back into a feeding binge. Instead, Toney remained true to his victory quest, and turned up in the best physical and mental condition he'd been in since he starched "Prince" Charles Williams in '94.

Fighting on HBO's *Boxing After Dark*, Toney and Jirov lit up the sport like no other fight thus far in 2003. A bitter personal distaste applied a touch of flavor to the barbaric affair, as the 34-year-old Toney matched blow for blow with the unrelenting Jirov throughout the night.

Although the 29-year-old Jirov's workhorse style dictated the fight's tempo, it was Toney's swift, sneaky counters that were landing with superior precision and accuracy. When Jirov wasn't digging hooks into Toney's gut along the ropes, the crafty Toney was unloading the heavy artillery upstairs.

It all made for a wild white-knuckle affair, as the 2,000-plus fans that

Although the straight right was a major weapon for Toney, it was when he began to put his left hook behind it that Jirov began to crumble. Both men showed great resiliency, roaring back almost every time the other gained a slight edge.

squeezed into the tiny Foxwoods Theater were treated to 36 minutes of fistic thrills. In fact, the last time the cruiserweight crew had produced such sizzle, Lou Duva was working the corner of Evander Holyfield in his epic 1986 war with Dwight Muhammad Qawi. But on this night, the feisty trainer watched from a ringside seat as Jirov and Toney redefined a cruiserweight classic, capped off by a wicked 12th round that had most of the patrons, including Duva, on the brink of cardiac arrest.

"Man, I looked up there, and for a second I thought I was watching Arturo Gatti and Micky Ward," joked Duva. "I've never seen anything like that in a cruiserweight fight. My heart was pounding through my chest the entire time."

By the time the bell sounded to start the final round, Jirov and Toney were clearly products of the furious 33 minutes of fist swapping that had preceded it. It had been a close, fiercely contested bout, and the outcome conceivably hung in the balance.

Moments after Roach told Toney, "You got to put this guy on his back," referee Steve Smoger motioned the combatants forward to begin the final three minutes of warfare. Toney stepped forward on weary legs as Jirov squinted at him through swollen eyes.

As the round began, an old foe of Toney's injected the final gust of encouragement that helped urge him on to a furious finish. Iran Barkley, the 1993 knockout victim of a prime Toney, rushed the ring apron and repeated, in so many expletives, what Roach had already demanded.

Toney complied, hammering away on Jirov with punishing lefts and rights. Finally, a left hook to the body, followed by a pair of rights to the head, bludgeoned Jirov to the canvas. As Jirov crashed down on his side, it marked a fitting release that was not only 11 rounds in the making, but one that had been bubbling up in Toney through years of pain.

"I'm just glad to see him looking like a champion again," said Barkley. "It was frustrating for me to see what happened to him [since '94] and knowing what kind of talent he was. I always knew he could do better. When he knocked this guy down tonight, he made a statement about himself. He let everybody know that even if he is old and gray, he shouldn't be counted out."

Fittingly, considering how gallantly

Despite the stilted scores handed in by the official judges, it was far from a one-sided fight. Jirov did everything he could to retain the title, steadily boring into Toney and banging away with the same hard blows that had stopped 27 of his 31 previous pro opponents.

he fought, neither was Jirov. He staggered up inside of Smoger's count and survived the few remaining seconds to the final bell.

The official tallies were surprisingly and illogically lopsided. Judges Glenn Feldman and Melvina Lathan both scored it 117-109, while Steve Weisfeld had it

"You've got to put him on his back," trainer Freddie Roach told Toney before the start of the final round. Roach has gotten more production out of Toney than any other trainer in recent years.

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116-110. THE RING had it 115-112 for Toney.

While the powers that be were busy lining up the next possibilities for the resurgent Toney, the new cruiser king looked into the crowd and called out every professional pug, retired or active, big or small, that he could pinpoint. He was a hungry man again, and this time, knives and forks didn't play into it.

No sooner had Toney, 66-4-2 (42), departed the ring, however, than we began to wonder if he would abandon the cruiserweight crowd just as soon as he had liberated it. Talk instantly turned to two men who reside a little north on the scale. Many speculated whether Toney would follow Chris Byrd and Roy Jones into the heavyweight ranks, and in doing so take on one of these artful dodgers. While many of these theorists were perhaps caught up in the hysteria of the moment, it was Byrd himself, sitting ringside, who put things in realistic terms.

"Listen, that was an in-shape James Toney," cracked Byrd. "And you saw how he faded down the stretch. Put him back in the ring with Roy Jones? Are you serious? Forget it. It will be just like the first fight they had, but much worse. He and Roy Jones aren't even on the same page. He and Chris Byrd aren't even on the same street."

Toney watches Jirov fall with just a few seconds remaining in the 12th round. After standing up under numerous flush punches throughout the fight, Jirov finally caved from a brutal three-punch combination. But he beat the count and finished on his feet.

But while the names, including fellow cruiserweights beltholders Wayne Braithwaite (WBC) and Jean-Marc Mormeck (WBA), were tossed around like poker chips, Duva was quick to remind those around him of the brave loser who'd displayed the kind of grit and tenacity that not everyone believed he had. After all, Toney and Jirov, 31-1 (27), worked together as a pair of defibrillator paddles, resuscitating a division that had been dead for more than a decade.

"These guys have to do it again," said Duva. "It would be a travesty if they didn't. The whole fight all I could think of was Evander and Dwight Qawi. This was the same kind of deal. The guys promoting the fight won this time out, but the fans were the real winners here."

Perhaps, but by the time the official winner arrived at the postfight press conference a little past midnight, there was no more rage left in him. He had left it all in the square ring down the hall.

"I feel great right now," said Toney, sitting back and lighting a stogie the size of Cuba.

Yes, the lights are back on in the cruiserweight division, and James Toney is holding the switch. ■

Ted Bodenrader is a freelance writer based in the Boston area and a regular contributor to this magazine.

PHOTO BY FRANK VITUCCI

PHOTO BY CHRIS FARINA

Will Toney stay in the cruiserweight division, or will he look to the bigger purses offered by fights against heavyweight beltholders Roy Jones (left) or Chris Byrd (right)? Byrd feels Toney wouldn't have much of a chance against either Jones or himself.

Where's The Heart And Soul?

HBO (GASP!) ON A LOSING STREAK

PHOTO BY CHRIS FARINA

Prophecy fulfilled: Critics said that the Barrera-Kelley fight would be a mismatch and they were proven right when Kelley was stopped in the fourth round of a totally one-sided fight. To make matters worse, it was a pay-per-view fight.

By Kevin Iole

If HBO ever decides to produce another series like *Legendary Nights: The Stories Behind HBO's Most Memorable Fights*, you can be sure the Bernard Hopkins-Morrade Hakkar and Marco Antonio Barrera-Kevin Kelley bouts will not be included.

Matchmaking is an inexact art at best, and even fights that look great on paper can turn out to be duds in the ring. But certain bouts are obviously mismatches from inception, and while that's a part of boxing that we've learned to live with, they are not the kind of fights fans are used to seeing on HBO, leave alone HBO Pay-Per-View. But during the early months of 2003 there have been an unusual number of weak matches broadcast by the cable network, the most non-competitive being Barrera's fourth-round knockout of badly faded Kelley.

Promoter John Jackson wasn't sure what type of reaction he would get from world featherweight champion Barrera when he went to tell him the identity of his next opponent. There had been talk that Barrera would meet Oscar Larios, a smaller man but one whom most would deem a threat for his skill, courage, and persistence. But Barrera, thanks to the unwelcome involvement of one of the dysfunctional sanctioning organizations, wasn't going to fight Larios. Instead, he would be meeting Kelley in a scheduled 12-round featherweight battle on HBO Pay-Per-View.

A prime Kelley vs. a prime Barrera would likely have been a fight for the ages. There once was little "The Flushing Flash" couldn't do in the ring. This wasn't, however, a prime Kelley, and it was Jackson's job to tell Barrera that Kelley was the choice. But when Jackson, who doubles as an assistant football coach at UNLV, delivered the news to Barrera, he was surprised.

"Marco's reaction was very serious, because it was clear he respected Kevin a great deal and you could tell right away that he felt this would be a difficult fight," said Jackson. "I wasn't worried about him being overconfident and not training, because I

PHOTO BY CHRIS FARINA

Barrera was originally scheduled to fight Oscar Larios in a much more competitive match, but the WBC threatened to take away Larios' 122-pound bout if he did. Instead, fans were saddled with Barrera-Kelley (pictured), in which "The Flushing Flash" was completely outclassed.

knew better than anyone how seriously he was taking Kevin."

Few others, though, had the same approach. The fight was being sold via HBO Pay-Per-View, but that didn't stop the HBO broadcasters from taking broadsides at the matchup.

Kelley was just two months shy of his 36th birthday when he met Barrera at the MGM Grand in Las Vegas and was nowhere near the fast, technically proficient, and powerful fighter he was in the early-to-mid-1990s. By the time the bell rang to begin the first round of what all but a few felt would be a monumental mismatch, it had been at least six years, perhaps longer, since Kelley had a truly quality win.

He was brought in to bide time until Jackson could arrange a rubber match between Barrera and bitter rival Erik Morales with Morales' promoter Bob Arum. Jackson figured Kelley's popularity in the East would translate into pay-per-view sales. The week of the fight, however, HBO's blow-by-blow announcer, Jim Lampley, didn't help to stoke the pay-per-view sales when he questioned Kelley's legitimacy as a contender.

"It's a monumental mismatch, just like is going to happen in a couple of weeks when Oscar De La Hoya fights Yory Boy Campas," Lampley said. "You feel terrible when you see matches like these and you just have to hope no one gets hurt."

Lampley's blunt assessment continued a trend in which HBO's on-air talent (Lampley and analysts Larry Merchant, George Foreman, Harold Lederman, and Emanuel Steward) have delivered sometimes scathing attacks on the quality of fights being broadcast on its own airwaves.

HBO has delivered its share of matches in the early going in 2003 that, going in, appeared compelling—the third fight between Miguel Barrera and Roberto Leyva, the welterweight battle between Vernon Forrest and Ricardo Mayorga, and the cruiserweight tilt between James Toney and Vassiliy Jirov come to mind—but for every hit there were more than a few flops.

Boxing fans had to get sick watching the

What made the Barrera-Kelley mismatch ever more glaring was that it came so close on the heels of another HBO bummer, featuring Bernard Hopkins' eighth-round TKO of unworthy challenger Morrade Hakkar (pictured). The network claims it was forced to televise the fight in order to also air the David Tua-Hasim Rahman rematch.

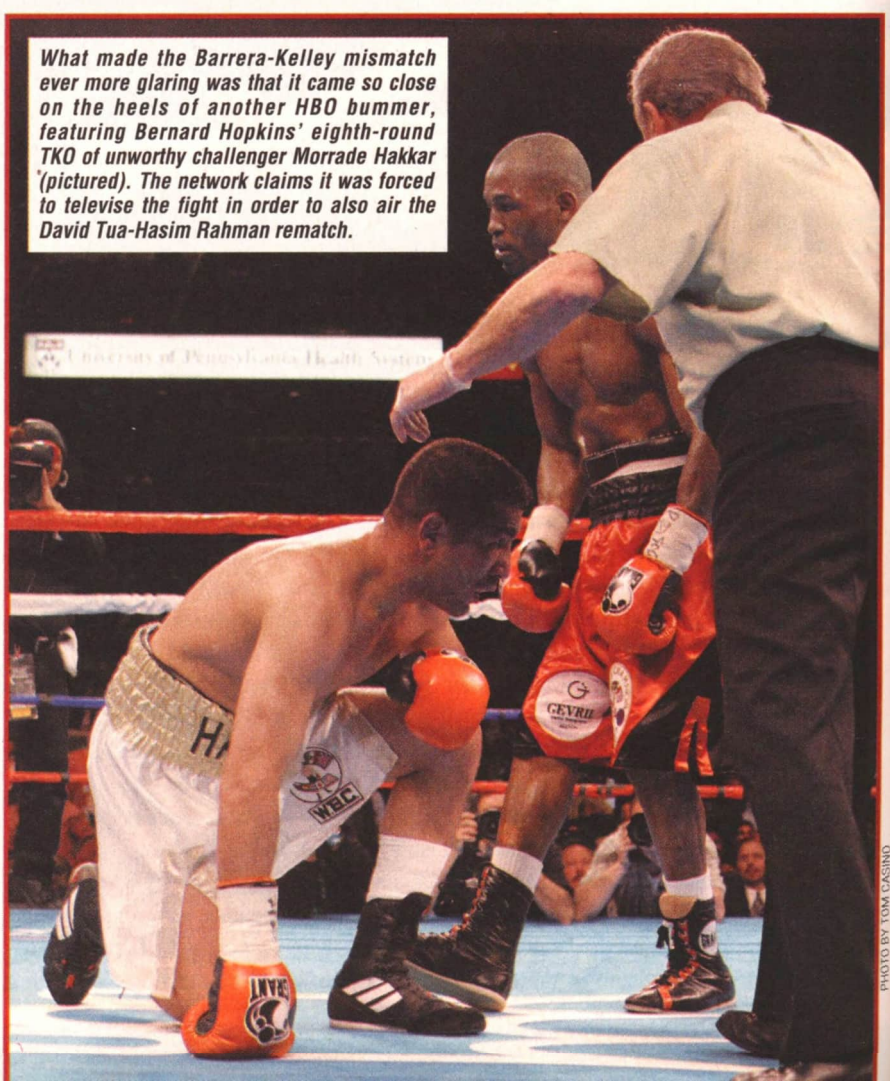

PHOTO BY TOM CASINO

PHOTO BY CHRIS FARINA

Qualifying for Oscar: Yory Boy Campas takes a left uppercut from Daniel Santos en route to an 11th-round TKO loss in his last major match before fighting De La Hoya in May. Why Top Rank and HBO could not come up with a better opponent for De La Hoya remains a mystery.

performance of Hakkar, who took on middleweight champion Hopkins in perhaps the biggest mismatch in many years.

Two days after the fight, Xavier James, HBO Sports vice president of programming, called boxing writers around the country to apologize for the poor quality of the match. HBO, James said, was forced to take the fight as a package in order to get the heavyweight battle between Hasim Rahman and David Tua (which, incidentally, was expected to be highly entertaining, but also turned out to be disappointing).

Hakkar literally sprinted in circles in the first round to avoid Hopkins and was so inept as to make Richard Frazier, the New York city cop who once fought Roy Jones, look like the reincarnation of Ray Robinson.

"That kind of event is not what we're all about, and for that we apologize," James said.

Even De La Hoya, who spent weeks defending his decision to fight the shopworn Campas, couldn't believe that a sanctioning organization had made Hakkar its top contender. De La Hoya, who hopes to end his career with a battle for the middleweight title against Hopkins, said Hakkar was worse even than one of his own high-profile poor opponents.

"This guy makes Patrick Charpentier look tough, didn't he?" De La Hoya said, trying, but failing, to suppress a few giggles.

But De La Hoya was hardly without blame. He was originally going to fight only once in '03, but then, helped in large part by a $12-million guarantee, agreed to a fight against the well-over-the-hill Campas.

Merchant didn't hesitate to identify the match for what it was, despite De La Hoya's position as one of the network's marquee attractions.

"Matchups like this make you wonder what they think of the public," Merchant said.

Foreman said the announcers shouldn't hesitate to be critical of a match on the network in order to maintain credibility with its audience. But Foreman said all of the blame doesn't lie with HBO. He said promoters who want to protect their investments are also at fault for such mismatches.

"The networks have given us the means to be honest," Foreman said, arguing that the large license fees paid by HBO and Showtime should be enough to get the best fighters into the ring against each other. "Why the same old promoters still try to sell the same old stuff is a mystery to me. So many true fans have to pay the way for the bad promoters. If someone gets hurt, it's always the fans because they pay the bills."

The Barrera-Kelley fight did about 80,000 sales, which passed the goal of 70,000. That was due largely to Barrera's status as one of the best pound-for-pound fighters in the sport and not because of the quality of the matchup.

Kelley, who during his prime was a superb technician, a slick southpaw with pop, was simply an old man this night. He was dropped by a rather ordinary looking hook from Barrera in the first round and went down twice more as a result of bodyshots in the fourth.

Formerly a proud warrior, Kelley was pleading in the fourth with his corner to stop the fight. After the first of two knockdowns in the round, he was on his hands and knees looking over to his corner, trying to get it to stop the fight.

Trainer Phil Borgia appeared to try to go up the steps in order to ask referee Robert Byrd to stop the fight, but he was intercepted by an inspector from the Nevada Athletic Commission and prevented from doing so.

The same thing happened after the second knockdown, but Byrd stopped it on his

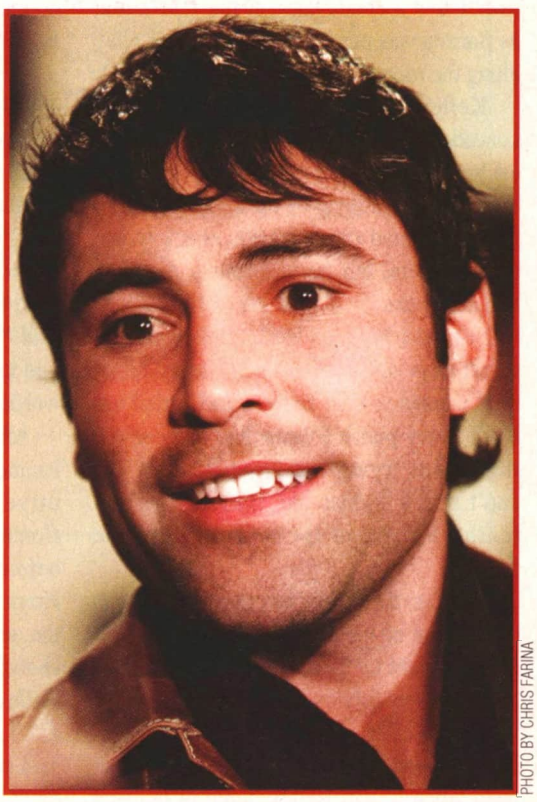

PHOTO BY CHRIS FARINA

Even De La Hoya had to laugh at Hakkar, noting that he might have been even worse than Patrick Charpentier, one of "The Golden Boy's" unworthy opponents. Oscar did not, however, critcize himself for fighting Campas.

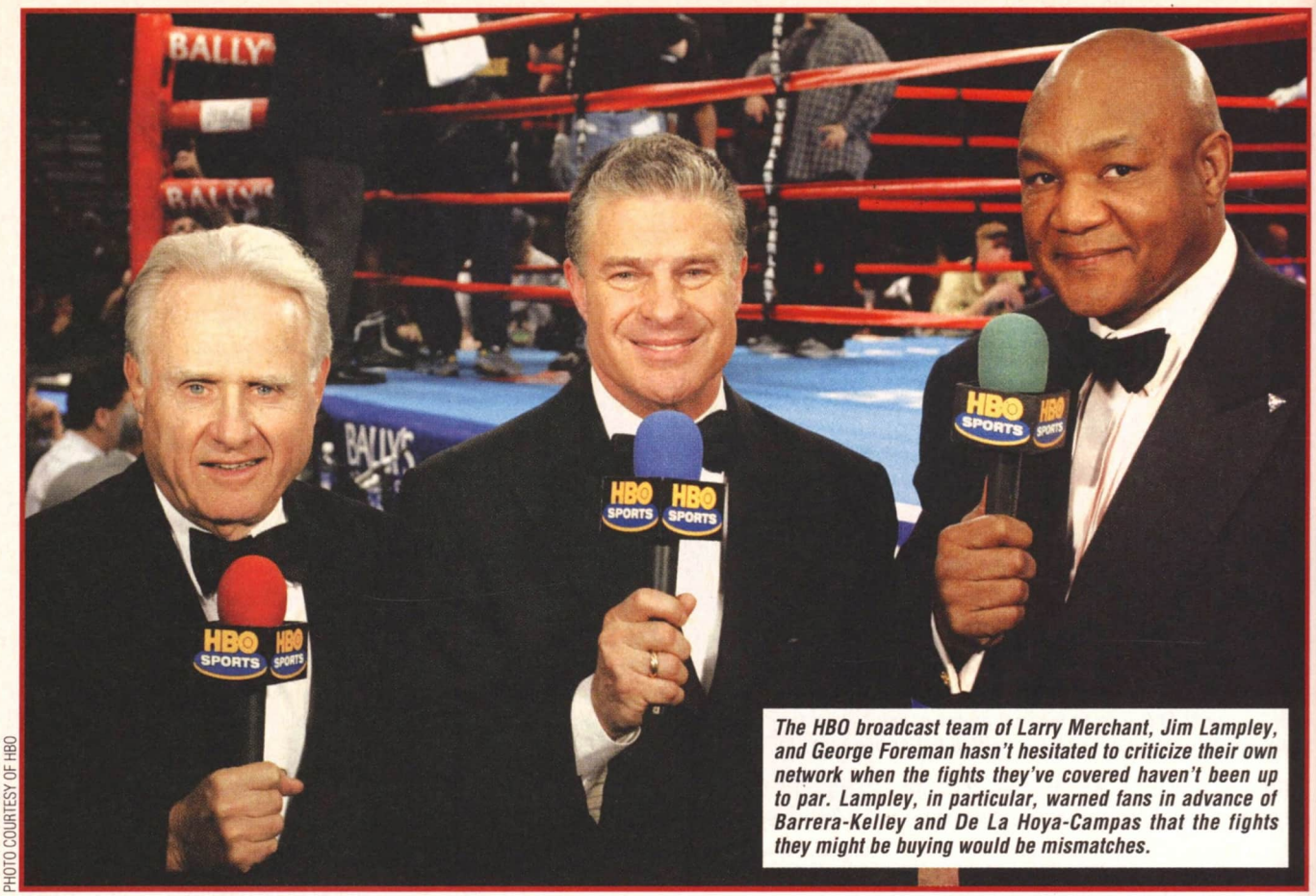

PHOTO COURTESY OF HBO

The HBO broadcast team of Larry Merchant, Jim Lampley, and George Foreman hasn't hesitated to criticize their own network when the fights they've covered haven't been up to par. Lampley, in particular, warned fans in advance of Barrera-Kelley and De La Hoya-Campas that the fights they might be buying would be mismatches.

own a few seconds later, at the 1:32 mark, as Barrera was pummeling a helpless Kelley along the ropes.

Kelley, 54-6-2 (36), wasn't about to concede once the fight was over and insisted he had trained purposefully and was there to win. Judging by his effort, it looked like he wanted the $300,000 check worse than the win, but he vigorously disputed that contention.

"I tried a little too hard," Kelley said. "I didn't show up for a payday. I wanted history. I wanted to beat Barrera and I tried too hard. Every punch I threw had bad conviction. I was trying way too hard, and you can't beat a fighter like Barrera, the best featherweight in the world, with one punch."

Barrera, 57-3 (40), has done a good job of cleaning up the senior citizen corps in the featherweight division, scoring a unanimous decision over Johnny Tapia last year before stopping Kelley, a fact that Merchant quickly mentioned in the postfight interview. But even when he put Kelley down in the first from a punch that didn't appear to be Tyson-esque, Barrera was cautious.

"In the first round when I knocked him down, I didn't want to take any chances," Barrera said.

He didn't want trouble, and apparently still didn't know Kelley was incapable of giving him any. And Kelley, who has done analysis for HBO, said he knew he was in trouble after he went down early.

"I've said when I'm commentating that when a fighter gets knocked down in the first, it's very hard to come back," Kelley said. "Those are my own words, and when I got knocked down in the first, my own words came back to haunt me."

Mismatches such as Barrera-Kelley have haunted boxing fans. Marc Ratner, the executive director of the Nevada Athletic Commission, was peppered with questions before both the Barrera-Kelley and De La Hoya-Campas bouts about the validity of the opponents. He staunchly defended both, though was a bit chagrined at the way Kelley so meekly succumbed.

"I expected more out of Kevin," Ratner said ruefully. "I didn't expect him to go in there and blow Marco away, but I really had the feeling he was going to put up a much better fight than he did."

When he didn't, the HBO announcers were there to call him on it. And while that may seem like a slap at their bosses, who play a large role in making those matches and bringing them to the air, HBO Sports President Ross Greenberg said it is nothing less than what he expects. The announcers, he said, are not coached and aren't told to root for the home team.

"I want them to say what they see," Greenberg said. "We have hired some of the best experts in the industry, and the fans have a right to hear their unvarnished opinions. Sometimes, some of us may not like hearing it, but we're glad they say what they say. If it has to be said, our guys will say it."

Having in-house critics is a good thing, and HBO is to be commended for giving the broadcast crew free rein to speak their minds. But what's really needed is more prefight quality control. HBO has been the Rolls Royce of televised boxing for so long it would be a terrible blow to the sport if the trend of broadcasting flagrant mismatches continues. ■

Kevin Iole covers boxing for the Las Vegas Review-Journal and is a regular contributor to this magazine.

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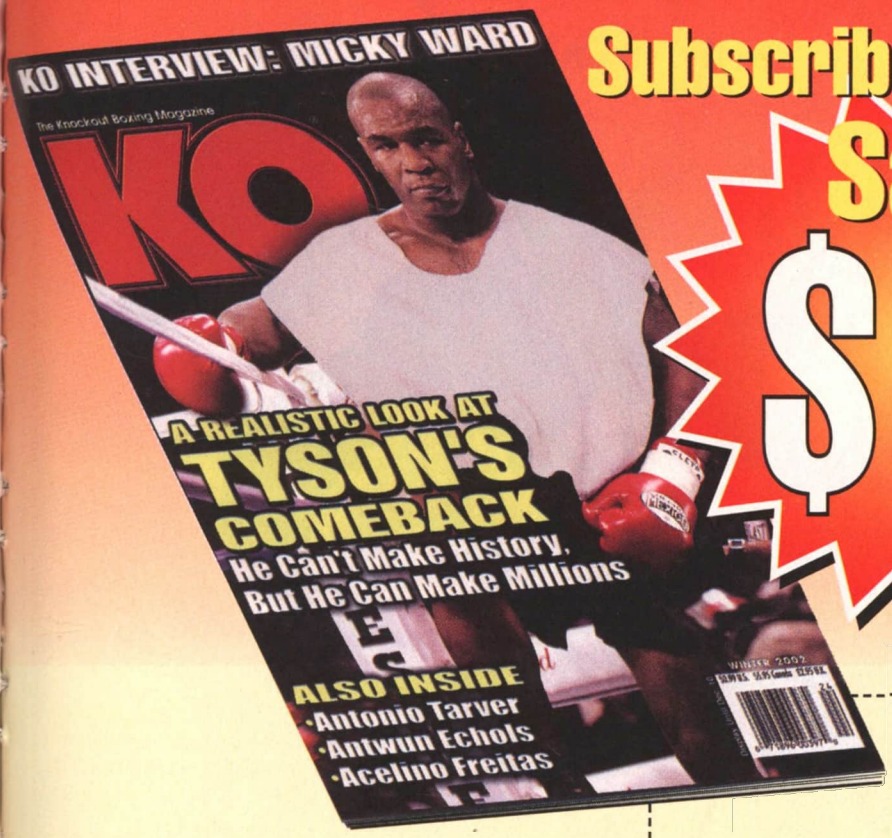

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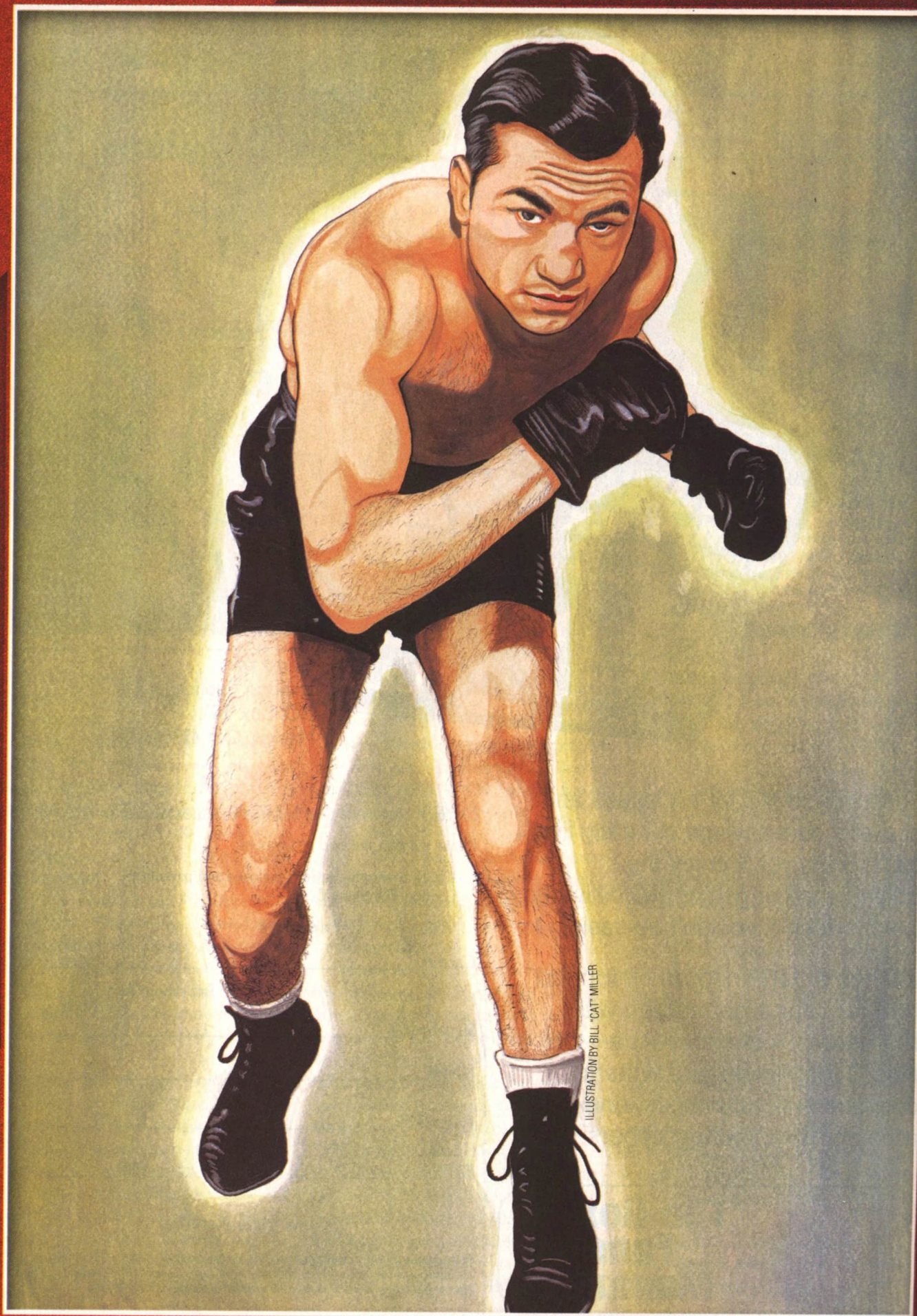


ILLUSTRATION BY BILL "CAT" MILLER

He consorted with everyone from Al Capone to Jack Ruby, he was a war hero, licked a drug habit, inspired a movie, and managed to squeeze in a Hall of Fame boxing career. It's all part of ...

THE AMAZING LIFE OF BARNEY ROSS

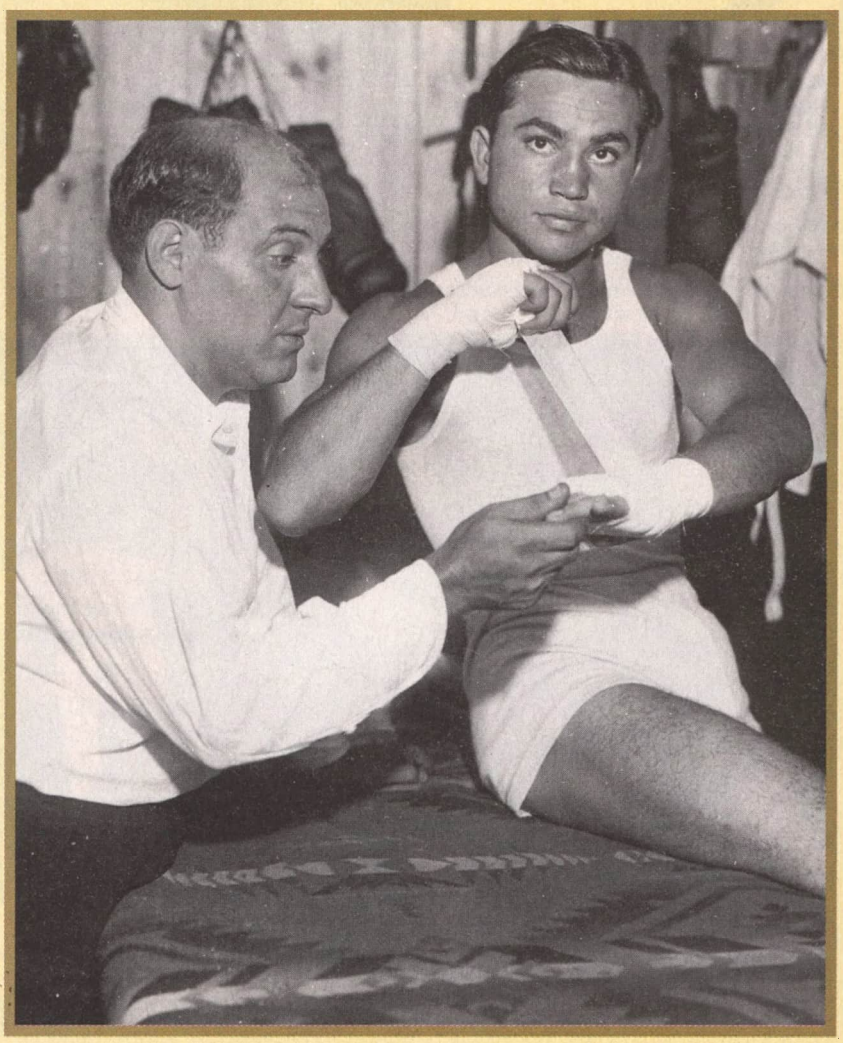
By Robert Cassidy

Barney Ross had tasted the excess of success. He had risen to the top of his world and enjoyed a view most of us can only imagine. He had been applauded, praised, and showered with adulation.

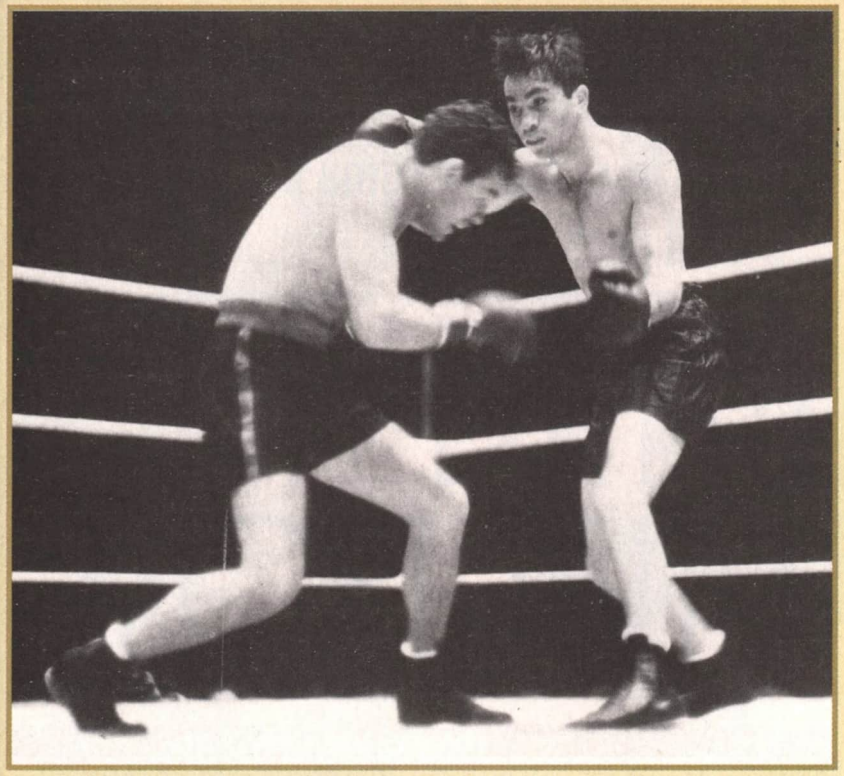
It wasn't all champagne toasts and fine steaks, though. Ross had also survived the horror of war, fighting alongside soldiers whose lives bled away on foreign soil. He had endured the anguish of drugs, sinking into society's gutter before freeing himself from addiction's deadly grip.

This is a man—perhaps both blessed and cursed—who experienced the drama of four lifetimes within the 57 years during which he lived. Much of that time was spent fighting in one way or another. The story of Barney Ross is one of success, heroism, failure, and redemption. His life away from boxing intersects with the gangster Al Capone, World War II, Hollywood, and the assassination of John F. Kennedy.

He was born Barnet David Rosofsky, on December 23, 1909, to Russian-Jewish immigrants. The family lived on Manhattan's gritty Lower East Side and his father, Isadore, was a pushcart peddler. Isadore was also a



Co-manager Art Winch helps Ross gets ready for a gym session in the early-1930s. Ross' swarming, all-action style demanded that he stay in top condition. He won several championship bouts by coming on strong down the stretch.



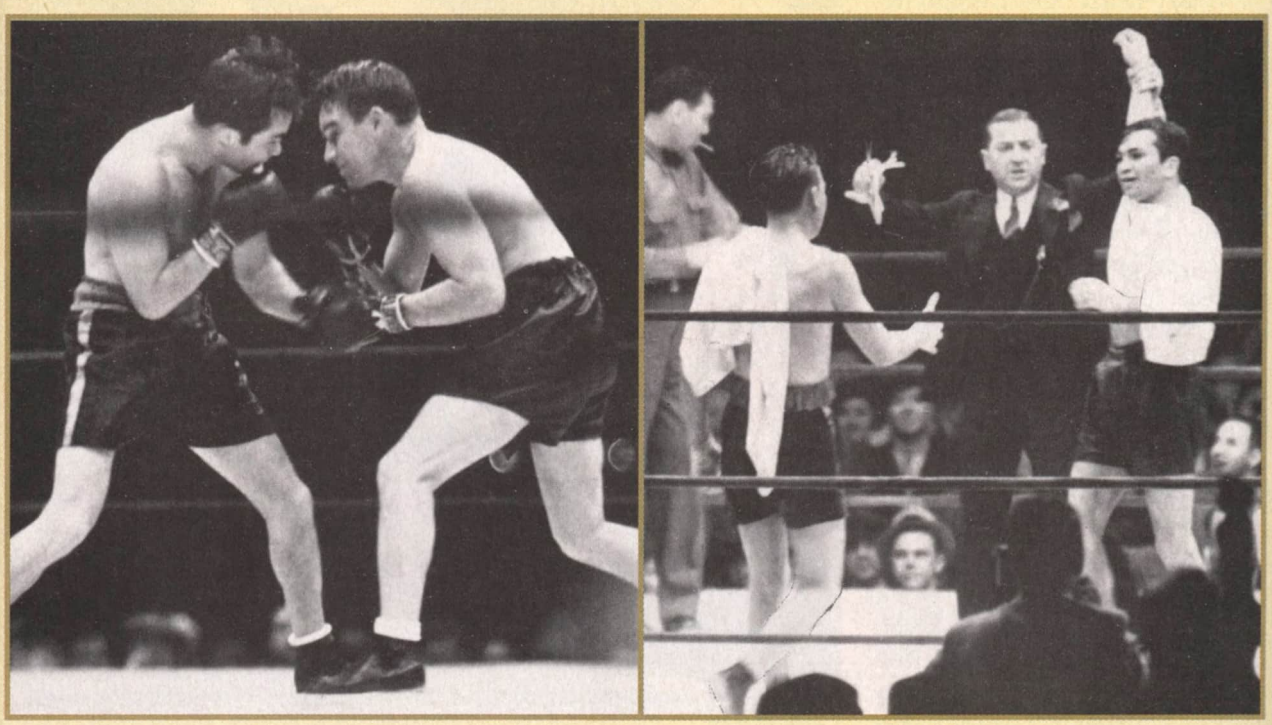
Ross (right) won his first world title when he tallied a close 10-round decision over Tony Canzoneri in June 1933 at Chicago's Wrigley Field. The decision was controversial, so they had a 15-round rematch later that year, which Ross won via another close call.

Talmudic scholar and the family practiced orthodox Judaism.

The family would later move to Chicago at a time when lawlessness prevailed over the Windy City and Capone held more sway than the local politicians. There, Ross' father opened his own grocery store and the family resided in two vacant rooms at the rear of the building.

Just a week before Ross' 15th birthday, a pair of gunmen entered the store and, during the ensuing robbery, shot and killed his father. In the aftermath, his mother suffered an emotional breakdown and the family was split up. Barney and an older brother were sent to live with relatives, while three younger siblings were sent to an orphanage.

Faced with difficult, life-altering decisions, Ross began to explore two decidedly violent worlds. The first was boxing; the second was organized crime. The anger over his father's murder and the pressure he felt to reunite his family fueled his passion in both endeavors. Ross began to run errands for local hoodlums who operated under the auspices of Capone. He was efficient, ambitious, and reliable, qualities that earned him an audience with Capone. While there has been much speculation about his relationship and activities for the mob, it is clear that Ross was steered away from that world rather quickly. One story suggests that Capone himself handed Ross a $20 bill (more than a week's



Ross fought three fierce battles with fellow great Jimmy McLarnin in 1934 and '35, winning, losing, and regaining the welterweight championship. All three bouts featured spirited head-to-head action (left), but Ross (pictured having his arm raised by ring announcer Mike Donovan following their final battle), emerged from the trilogy with a slight edge.

Ross holds off Ceferino Garcia in their 1937 title bout at the Polo Grounds in New York. All told, they fought three times, with Ross winning all three on points. His last victory over Garcia was Ross' final successful defense of the welterweight crown.

salary for some at the time) and instructed him to do something better with his life.

That left boxing. Ross turned pro in '29 and began to emerge as a force in the lightweight division with decisions over veteran Ray Miller and former featherweight champ Bat Battalino in '32. A 10-round verdict over Billy Petrolle would then earn him a title shot against lightweight and junior welterweight champion Tony Canzoneri.

On June 23, 1933, Ross met Canzoneri before hometown fans at Chicago Stadium in a 10-round title bout. The champion swarmed over his young challenger for the first six or seven rounds, but Ross staged a gutsy rally late in the fight and secured a majority decision to capture the 135-pound and 140-pound championships. The verdict drew the ire of Canzoneri's camp, and a rematch followed less than three months later.

The second Ross-Canzoneri bout took place at the Polo Grounds in New York, Canzoneri's base of operations. This one was scheduled for 15 rounds and was another grueling fight. Again, Ross pulled ahead in the final rounds and was awarded a split decision.

Ross immediately relinquished the lightweight title and defended the junior welterweight belt four more times before moving up to challenge the hard-hitting welterweight champion Jimmy McLarnin. An interesting element of the Ross-McLarnin fights centered on the ethnicity and religion of the combatants, a common theme used by promoters of that era.

McLarnin, a Catholic born in Ireland, had defeated a host of top Jewish fighters, including the beloved Benny Leonard. It's ludicrous to suggest that McLarnin targeted Jewish fighters. At the time, there were simply lots of Jewish fighters populating the ratings. Nonetheless, fans, the media, and promoters focused on the curious angle of the fight.

The first bout took place May 28, 1934, at the Long Island City Bowl before 60,000 fans. With Ross swarming and McLarnin bombing away, the action had the fans delirious. Ross, who at 137¾ was giving away almost 10 pounds, was the quicker fighter, and McLarnin had difficulty nailing him with his trademark right hand. The moment of truth finally came in round nine, when Ross was dropped for the first time in his career. He got up without a count and promptly dropped McLarnin. The Irishman also rose without a count and the battle continued until the final bell.

When the 15th round ended, the verdict was split. Referee Harry Forbes and judge Harold Barnes scored for Ross, 13-1-1 and 12-2-1 in rounds. Judge Tom O'Rourke saw McLarnin a winner, 9-1-5. A rematch was held four months later, and that time McLarnin regained the title with a split decision.

In their final encounter, exactly one year after the first, Ross came away with a unanimous decision. Once again, the action was explosive. Damon Runyon wrote that it was, "the most desperate 15-round fight between little men ... it was so fierce and so close, every step of the journey, with the men fighting half the time head-to-head."

Ross would continue fighting until '38. Along the way he defeated Baby Joe Gans, Izzy Jannazzo, and scored three decisions over Ceferino Garcia. In the final fight of his career, he absorbed a horrible beating at the hands of Henry Armstrong, losing his welterweight title in a lopsided deci-

A Marine officer pins the Silver Star on Ross' chest, which was awarded to him for his valor during the Battle of Guadalcanal. Ross, who was wounded by shrapnel, became addicted to the morphine he was given for pain. Beating drugs soon became the biggest fight of the ex-champ's life.

sion on May 31 at Madison Square Garden. There were several occasions when the fight was nearly stopped, but Ross begged to continue. When co-managers Art Winch and Sam Pain informed him they were throwing in the towel, he exclaimed, "You do that, and I'll never talk to you again. I want to go out like a champion." Referee Art Donovan visited the corner following the 11th, 12th, and 13th rounds, and each time Barney pleaded his case. "I've got to go out like a champion," he insisted. "Let me finish. I have never been knocked out."

His boxing career ended that night, but the fighting would continue.

When the Japanese bombed Pearl Harbor in '41, Ross, like many Americans, took it as a personal attack. He received a waiver and joined the Marines at the age of 33. Ross enlisted to serve his country on the front lines, not box exhibitions or give rah-rah speeches to the troops before they shipped out.

In November '42, Ross found himself fighting for Guadalcanal, one of the Solomon Islands. It would be the turning point of the war in the Pacific and one of the bloodiest campaigns of World War II: The United States lost 1,598 men, 1,152 of them Marines, while the Japanese lost more than 10,000 in the fighting.

During a firefight along the Matanikau River between November 18 and 20, Ross voluntarily remained at the front to protect wounded comrades while the rest of his unit retreated. He sat in a foxhole with two wounded soldiers, while two wounded Marines were lying in another foxhole nearby. A man of his stature and success at home could have clearly avoided such a grave situation. But, as he would prove throughout his life, Barney Ross was at his best while fighting back. A harrowing 14-hour battle was about to begin, and Private Barney Ross, a three-time world champion, was about to be tested again.

While the wounded soldiers loaded rifles and kept passing them to Ross, he singlehandedly managed to keep the enemy at bay. He estimated that he fired 300 rifle rounds and threw 21 grenades. A unit of U.S. soldiers arrived at 7 a.m. on November 20 that engaged the enemy and rescued Ross and his comrades. Of the four wounded servicemen Ross stayed to protect, two survived. The reports vary, but anywhere from 10 to 23 Japanese soldiers were found dead in the area surrounding Ross' position.

"I was scared half to death," Ross said. "I never expected to get out. I was crying, and praying, and shooting, and throwing grenades, and half the time, I guess, I was out of my head."

Ross was awarded a Silver Star for heroism. The citation that accompanied the medal read in part, "... for conspicuous gallantry and intrepidity in action ... his great personal courage

Ross stayed in the public eye after his ring career was over, and in 1949 was featured in the radio version of **This Is Your Life.** *From left to right: emcee Ralph Edwards, Ross' mother, Sarah Rosofsky, Barney's brother, George, Henry Armstrong (who ended Ross' career), referee Dave Miller, Father Frederic Gehring (Ross' old Marine chaplain), former co-manger Winch, and Dave Adkins, whose life Ross saved at Guadalcanal.*

and sincere devotion to his comrades were in keeping with the highest traditions of the United States Naval Service."

Upon the news of the Silver Star, Ross said, "Tell 'em to give it to my company, this is no one-man show."

In addition to the shrapnel wounds, Ross also contracted a severe case of Malaria while on Guadalcanal. He was given daily doses of morphine, which rapidly developed into an addiction. While still in the service, Ross would steal packets of morphine from the hospital pharmacy or a medic's bag. He once broke into a medicine locker on a naval ship to satisfy his dependency.

Once he was discharged from the service, Ross began working for the Milton Blackstone Public Relations firm in New York and lived at the Edison Hotel. While morphine became increasingly harder to find, Ross changed his habit to heroin and would send runners out on the streets to purchase the drug. He was spending $500 a week to support his habit.

As his life spiraled out of control, his wife, Cathy, began divorce proceedings and Ross realized he had to make a change. With the support of his employer, he voluntarily checked into the U.S. Public Health Hospital in Lexington, Kentucky, in '46. The temptation of suicide was a constant companion, but after a four-month stay, he emerged drug-free and remained that way for the rest of his life.

Ross went public with his drug problem at a time when it would have been very easy to cover it up. The private lives of celebrities in that era generally remained private and the sports pages were often filled with stories that glorified heroes.

"I am doing this in the hope that the publicity which my case is receiving will encourage others, suffering as I have suffered, to take the steps that I have taken," Ross said. He would later say that the biggest fight he ever won was against drug addiction.

A year after his release from the hospital, he and Cathy were remarried. A book was written about his life, *No Man Stands Alone*, and in '57 Hollywood made a film of the story, *Monkey On My Back*, starring Cameron Mitchell as Ross.

The movie begins with his final fight against Armstrong and deals primarily with his battle against drugs. The cause of his addiction—service in World War II—could have easily been

used as an excuse. Ross made no excuses and wanted it depicted with graphic realism. When a segment of the movie, a 30-second scene of Ross injecting himself with morphine, was being cut, Ross appealed to the administrator of the movie industry's production code. At the time, regulations prohibited filmmakers from portraying the actual administration of drugs.

Ross, however, felt it was important and argued, "It would be like a fighter pulling a punch to leave it out. This is the moment of self-destruction in the life of an addict. This is the moment of despair and this is what a potential addict needs to see to discourage him."

In the remaining years of his life, Ross was a fixture at big fights and he even attempted to manage fighters in the early-'60s. It's believed that he dissipated his ring earnings and profits from his life story by betting on the horses, over-tipping, and handing out wads of cash to friends on hard times.

In '63, Ross lent his name to a fundraising drive for the defense of Jack Ruby, the man who shot Lee Harvey Oswald two days after Oswald allegedly assassinated President John F. Kennedy. When asked why he supported Ruby, Ross explained that the two were childhood friends from Chicago.

Along the way, Ross also developed an affinity for cigarettes, and chain smoking became yet another vice. This one finally caught up with him when Ross developed throat cancer. The boxing community rallied around him. Tony Zale was a constant companion, and in New York, at Sunnyside Garden, a benefit was held in his honor. On the night of November 30, 1966, Willie Pep and Sandy Saddler boxed an exhibition and over a dozen past and present champions—James J. Braddock, Petey Scalzo, Mickey Walker, Jake LaMotta, Emile Griffith, Carlos Ortiz, and Dick Tiger among them—turned an ordinary club show into a boxing extravaganza. The event raised over $10,000 for medical bills. A phone was hooked up to the ringside public address system and Ross spoke from his Chicago apartment. His words were met with thunderous applause.

It proved the final time the champion was showered with public adulation. On January 17, 1967, less than two months after the benefit, Ross succumbed to throat cancer. There was simply no more fight left inside him. ■

Robert Cassidy is a former associated editor of this magazine and a regular contributor.

Ross hit the headlines one last time in 1964 when he testified for the defense at the murder trial of Jack Ruby, who was convicted of murdering Lee Harvey Oswald, the alleged assassin of President John F. Kennedy. Ross, pictured entering the Dallas courthouse with defense attorney Joe Tonahill, was a boyhood pal of Ruby's.

Ross checks actor Cameron Mitchell's makeup on the set of the 1957 movie* Monkey On My Back*, which picked up Ross' life story with the Armstrong fight and concluded with the ex-champ kicking drugs following his wartime experiences in the Pacific.

COLLECTORS ALERT!

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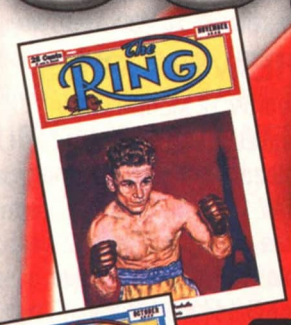

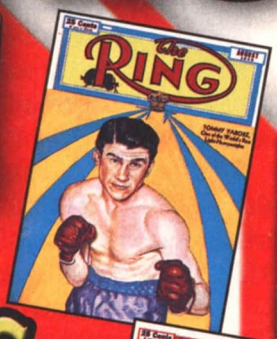

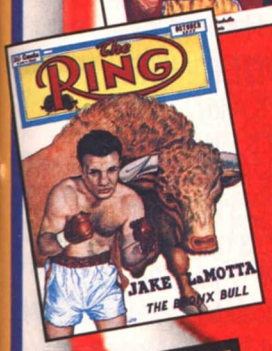

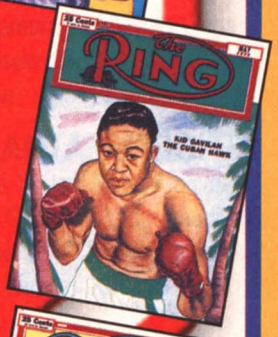

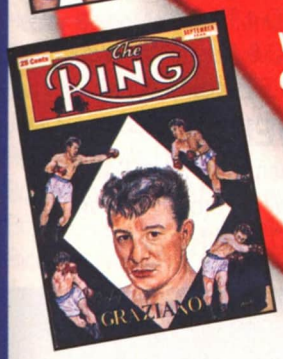

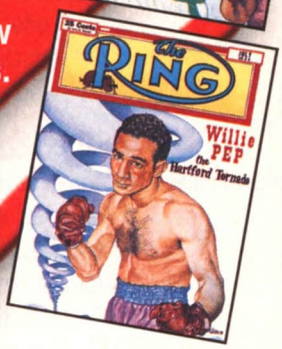

An archaeologist expedition through our vast warehouse uncovered what even we didn't know existed: vintage *Ring* magazines from the 1940s. Most are in very good condition. The supply on these rare collectors' items is very small and they will go quickly!

May 1949: Kid Gavilan, Joe Louis, Joe Walcott, technical boxers, "Pedlar" Palmer, Battling Levinsky, Fighter of the Month: Laurent Dauthuille.

July 1949: Willie Pep, Louis' successor, Ray Robinson, Jack Dempsey, Mike Jacobs, Gentleman Jim Savage, Harry S. Sharpe, Walker Law, Nat Fleischer remembers, Fighter of the Month: Honore Pratesi.

August 1949: Tommy Yarosz, Al Weill, LaMotta-Cerdan, Elley Bennett, Joey Maxim, Willie Lewis, Charley Fusari, Nat Fleischer remembers, Fighter of the Month: Bruce Woodcock.

September 1949: Rocky Graziano, Robinson-Gavilan, Jake LaMotta, Richie Mitchell, Patsy Haley, Nat Fleischer remembers, Fighter of the Month: Ezzard Charles.

October 1949: Jake LaMotta, James D. Norris, Charles-Lesnevich, Laurent Dauthuille, Ike Williams, Steve Belloise, Vince Dundee, Battling Reddy, Irish boxers, Nat Fleischer remembers, Fighter of the Month: Ezzard Charles.

November 1949: Laurent Dauthuille, Mike Jacobs, Graziano-Fusari, Robinson-Belloise, young heavyweights, Young Brion, Johnny Indrisano & Lionel Canegata, McCarty-Palzer, Nat Fleischer remembers, Fighter of the Month: Sugar Ray Robinson

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SUMMARY

HEAVYWEIGHTS

Michael Grant KO 8 Gilbert Martinez
Sinan Samil Sam KO 7 Julius Francis
Danny Williams KO 4 Bob Mirovic
Oliver McCall KO 3 Dennis McKinney
Luan Krasniqi KO 1 Przemyslaw Saleta
Dominick Guinn KO 9 Charles Hatcher
Duncan Dokiwari KO 3 Carlton Johnson
Herbie Hide KO 7 Derek McCafferty
Maurice Wheeler W 8 Terrance Lewis
Willi Fischer KO 5 Patriche Costel
Peter Okhello KO 6 Colin Wilson
Albert Sosnowski W 6 Michael Holden
Dennis Bakhtov KO 4 Garing Lane
Atilla Levin KO 1 Gary Winmon
David Defiagbon W 6 Joe Lenart
Paolo Vidoz KO 1 Eduardo Sandivares
Eddie Chambers KO 4 Craig Tomlinson
Art Binkowski W 6 Thomas Williams
Willie Chapman KO 3 T.J. Wilson
B.J. Flores KO 1 Dallas Lane

CRUISERWEIGHTS

James Toney W 12 Vassiliy Jirov
(Wins IBF Title)
Pavel Melkomian Tech. Win 5
Krzysztof Wlodarczyk
Rich LaMontagne KO 5 Ernest Mateen
Vincenzo Rossitto W 10 Paolo Ferrara

LIGHT HEAVYWEIGHTS

Antonio Tarver W 12 Montell Griffin
(Wins Vacant IBF & WBC Titles)
Julio Gonzalez KO 3 Kenny Bowman
Paul Briggs W 10 Jorge Castro
Tony Menefee KO 1 Chris Mills
Aneudi Santos KO 5 Dan Sheehan
Yusef Mack KO 1 Robert Marsh

SUPER MIDDLEWEIGHTS

Mads Larsen KO 5 Andy Liebing
Armand Krajnc W 8 Eliseo Nogueira
Anthony Bonsante KO 11 Tony Ayala
Mger Mkrtchain KO 3 Freeman Barr
Mikkel Kessler KO 3 Craig Cummings
Shannan Taylor W 12 Marc Bargero
Mario Veit W 10 Jose Maria Guerrero
Vitali Tsypko KO 4 Thabiso Mogale
Jose Alonzo KO 8 Alberto Albaladejo
Gene Molen W 6 Ronald Boddie

MIDDLEWEIGHTS

Howard Eastman KO 3 Scott Dann
Verno Phillips W 10 Bronco McKart
Julio Garcia KO 5 Johnny Rivera

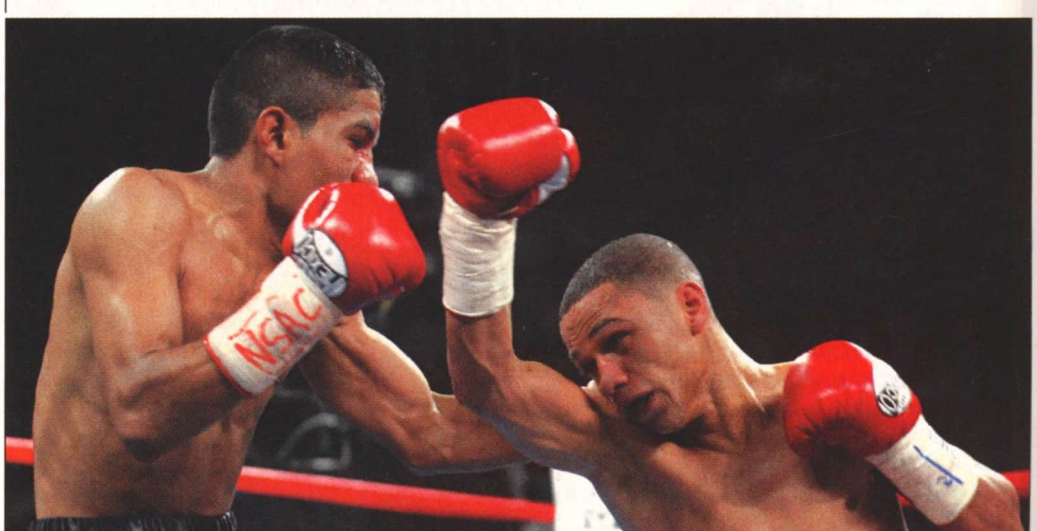

PHOTO BY WILL HART/HBO

Strawweight Ivan Calderon launches a right at Eduardo Marquez

Chris Walsh Tech. Win 6
Hector Camacho Sr.
Kenny Ellis W 12 Fernando Zuniga
Dirk Dzemski W 12 Alexander Polizzi
Jorge Sendra KO 7 Xavi Moya
Akira Ohigashi KO 4 Cesar Yarte
Ryan Rhodes KO 3 Paul Wesley
Steven Bendall W 12 Mike Algoet
Peter Manfredo Jr. KO 2 Ronnie Johnson
Corrado Battaglia KO 3 Rastislav Kovacs

JUNIOR MIDDLEWEIGHTS

Oscar De La Hoya KO 7 Yory Boy Campas
(Retains World Title)
Rodney Jones KO 3 Gilbert Jackson
Carlos Bojorquez KO 3 Tony Marshall
Robert Frazier W 10 Charles Murray
Mihaly Kotai W 10 Darren Rhodes
Jamie Moore W 12 Michael Jones
Ishe Smith W 10 Sam Garr
Rogelio Martinez W 10 Freddie Cuevas
Yuri Foreman KO 2 Charles Clark
Sechew Powell W 6 Jamal Harris
Harry Yorgey KO 1 Lowell Christian

WELTERWEIGHTS

Hector Quiroz KO 9 Antonio Diaz
Elio Ortiz W 12 Ray Oliveira
Larry Marks KO 5 Kevin Tillman
Jose Rosa Gomez KO 8
Raul Armando Lopez
Bolillo Gonzalez W 8 Dewey Welliver
Edwin Cassiani KO 2 Oscar Delgado
Rico Tan KO 7 Ambioris Figuero
Joseph Makaringe KO 5
Bruno Sakabunda
Hiroshi Watanabe W 12 Yosuke Otsuka
Alpaslan Aguzum W 12 Raul Bejarano
Noufel Ben Rabah W 12 Fred Kinuthia
Fernando Mena KO 6 Tony Martinez
Anthony Thompson KO 3 Brad Jensen

JUNIOR WELTERWEIGHTS

Miguel Cotto KO 4 Joel Perez
Cesar Bazan KO 4 Douglas Villareal
Saul Duran KO 3 Freddy Cruz
Allan Vester W 6 Leonti Voronchuk
David Diaz KO 1 Franco Ogentho
Hector Lizarraga W 10 Luis Montes
Diego Gimenez W 10 Cesar Leiva
Ted Bami KO 9 Laszlo Herzog
Sumya Anani KO 1 Fredia Gibbs

LIGHTWEIGHTS

Floyd Mayweather W 12 Victoriano Sosa
(Retains World Title)
Steve Forbes W 10 Silverio Ortiz
Diego Corrales KO 3 Felix St. Kitts
Julio Pablo Chacon W 10
Esteban Morales
Goyo Vargas W 10 Julio Cesar Leon
Billy Irwin KO 4 Luis Gustavo Sosa
Michael Clark W 12 Steve Quinonez
Ubaldo Hernandez KO 2 Henry Cokes
Rocky Martinez KO 2 Ed Humes
Yuri Romanov W 10 Nigel Claasen
Ricardo Silva W 10 Sergio Gonzalez
Prawet Victorygym KO 5 Gerald Dike
Chad Brisson KO 7 Michael Davis
Abdel Jebahi KO 5 Nasser Lakrib
Miguel Huerta W 8 Darling Jimenez
Jennifer Alcorn W 8 Mia St. John

JUNIOR LIGHTWEIGHTS

Sirimongkol Singmanassak KO 6
Anthony Tezhewa
(Non-Title Bout)
Phillip Ndou KO 1 Alex Moon
Lakva Sim KO 4 Luis Villalta
Jorge Barrios KO 4 Fabian Salazar
Affif Djelti KO 8 Youssef Djibaba
Craig Doherty KO 8 Dean Pithie
Mike Anchondo KO 10 Roque Cassiani
Mzonke Fana KO 4 Laszlo Bognar
Nobuhito Honmo W 10
Hidekazu Matsunobu
Athos Menegola W 12 Mkuseli Kondile
Bernard Dunne KO 1 Oscar Rosales
Isra Girgrah W 8 Laura Serrano

FEATHERWEIGHTS

Marco Antonio Barrera KO 4 Kevin Kelley
(Retains World Title)
Erik Morales KO 5 Fernando Velardez
(Retains WBC Title)
Derrick Gainer W 12 Oscar Leon
(Retains WBA Title)
Willie Jorrin KO 2 John Hoffman
Nadel Hussein KO 2 Nobunaga Satsuma
Rocky Juarez KO 6 Frankie Archuleta
Spend Abazi KO 8 Samir Laala
Kozo Ishii W 10 Michael Domingo
Setsuo Segawa KO 2 Anucha Sitgorson
Masanori Sugita W 10 Joebar Damosmog
Cristian Favela W 12 Phillip Payne
Steven Luevano W 8 Johnny Nolasco
Robert Guerrero KO 1 David Vasquez

JUNIOR FEATHERWEIGHTS

Oscar Larios W 12 Shigeru Nakazato
(Retains WBC Title)
Cruz Carbajal KO 2 Steve Dotse
Yokthai Sithoar W 10 Akihiko Nago
Napapol Kiatisakchokchai KO 8
Simon Ramoni
Somsak Sithchatchawal KO 12
Trevor Gouws

BANTAMWEIGHTS

Veerapol Sahaprom W 12 Hugo Dianzo
(Retains WBC Title)
Silence Mabuza KO 3
Julio Cesar Medina
Ratanachai Vorapin KO 4 Joven Jorda
Eiji Kojima W 10 Waenpetch Chuwatana
Steve Molitor W 10 Julio Coronel
Dario Azuaga KO 3 Pedro Del Valle
Sasha Baktin KO 8 Hiroaki Murakoshi
Poonsawat Kratingdaenggym KO 6
Kahramon Orzikulov
Yoshinodu Nakamura W 10 Rolly Llunas
Eduardo Escobedo KO 6
Nestor Paniagua

JUNIOR BANTAMWEIGHTS

Jose Navarro W 12 Jorge Luis Gonzalez
Dimitry Kirilov KO 3 Ravil Mukhamadiarov
Medgoen Singsurat KO 5 Jun Magsipoc
Pramuansak Phosuwan KO 4
Kamani Pohoho
Prosper Matsuura KO 7
Masayuki Arinaga

FLYWEIGHTS

Vic Darchinyan Tech. Win 8 Raul Medina
Brian Viloria KO 8 Valentin Leon
Noriyuki Komatsu KO 5
Phanomdetch Auyudhnakorn
Brahim Asloum W 8 Zolile Mbityi
Regina Halmich W 10 Cathy Brown

JUNIOR FLYWEIGHTS

Jorge Arce Tech. Win 6
Melchor Cob-Castro
(Retains WBC Title)
Muhammad Rachman W 10
Steve Dimaisip
Jair Jimenez W 12 Juan Keb Baas
Masato Hatakeyama KO 9
Katsunari Takayama

STRAWWEIGHTS

Ivan Calderon Tech. Win 9
Eduardo Marquez
Rodel Mayol W 12 Isidro Lorona
Oleydong Sithsamuochai W 10
Isidro Lorona
Carlos Fajardo KO 8 Rafael Lozano
Vaia Zaganas W 6 Nina Ahlin
Vaia Zaganas KO 2 Holly Dunaway

BOXING EQUIPMENT
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PRESENTS

The RING

FIGHTER *of the* MONTH

It's not quite George Foreman coming back to regain the heavyweight title 20 years after losing it, but James Toney's victory over Vassiliy Jirov to capture the IBF cruiserweight belt more than eight years after his last title reign ended certainly makes him a strong candidate for Comeback of the Year in 2003. And in the meantime, it made him the obvious choice for Fighter of the Month.

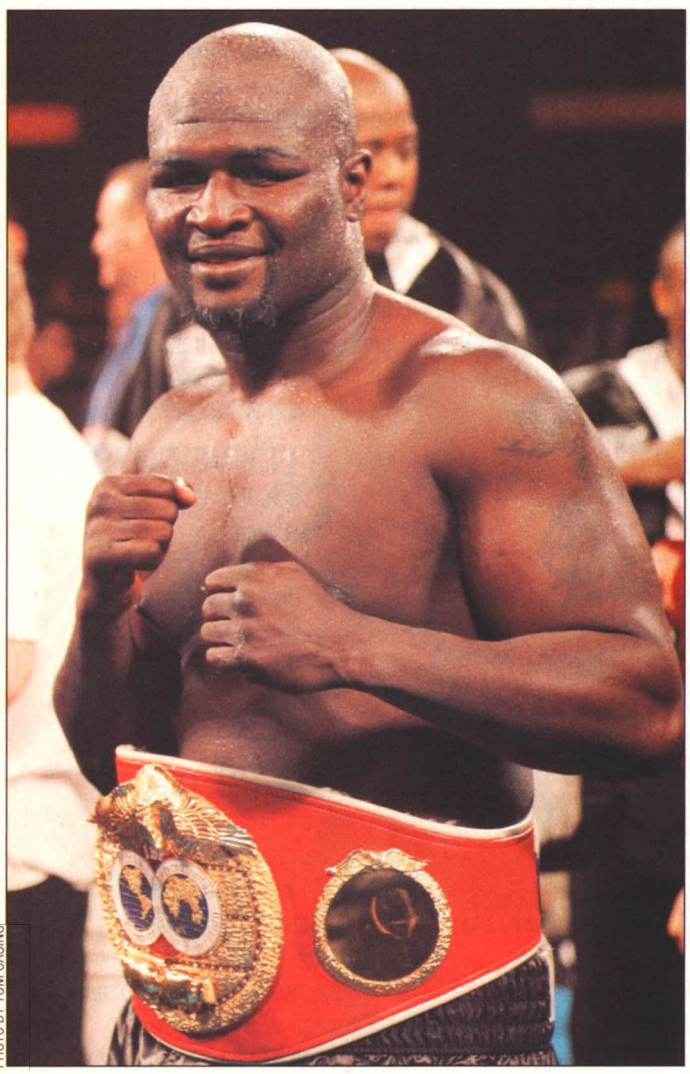

PHOTO BY TOM CASINO

In Jirov, Toney was facing a younger, stronger man who had claimed Olympic gold in '96 and had won all 31 of his subsequent professional fights. But Toney showed that youth and strength (not to mention superior conditioning) can be overcome with masterful offensive and defensive boxing skills. Although the fight appeared close throughout, Toney was quietly dishing out a hellacious beating, and it caught up with Jirov in the final round. A searing combination, highlighted by two vicious right uppercuts, put Jirov on the canvas late in the 12th, sealing the unanimous decision victory for the now-three-division titleholder.

It was in November 1994, just 13 days after Foreman upset Michael Moorer, that Toney lost his last major title to Roy Jones. Now, another guy with a shaved head and a love for food has pulled off an unlikely comeback. And if he can keep that love for food under control, James Toney's revival just might last a while.

James Toney

RINGSIDE REPORTS

Floyd Mayweather W 12 Victoriano Sosa

Fresno, California: Genius is often underappreciated. At least that's what Mayweather was probably thinking after he made his second successful defense of the world (and WBC) lightweight championship he won against Jose Luis Castillo in April 2002.

The undefeated 26-year-old Mayweather, 134, Grand Rapids, Michigan, returned to the same formula that had guided him in his previous four bouts—pure defensive wizardry interspersed with timely, accurate offense—in his 12-round unanimous decision over the 29-year-old Sosa, 134, Santiago, Dominican Republic, at Selland Arena.

The crowd of 7,225 on hand to see the city's first-ever world title fight apparently didn't have good enough seats, raining boos and profanity down on ringside judges Chuck Hassett (USA) and Jack Woodburn (USA), who both scored it 118-110, and Lou Filippo (USA), who saw it 119-109, all in favor of "Pretty Boy" Floyd, who improved to 30-0 (20).

Mayweather never allowed Sosa to come close to landing the same bombs he did against IBF lightweight titlist Paul Spadafora, whom Sosa knocked down twice before losing a unanimous decision in their March 2000 title tilt.

The pro-Sosa (or pro-action) crowd cheered wildly whenever Sosa unloaded combinations at Mayweather, which he did whenever he was able to get close to him along the ropes. But the champion rendered the incoming shells impotent, catching the shots on his gloves, arms, and elbows or making them miss altogether by moving his head. On one occasion in round seven—the only round all three judges gave Sosa—Mayweather made Sosa miss so badly that "Santico" ended up on the canvas, which referee Raul Caiz Sr. (USA) correctly ruled a slip.

CompuBox statistics served as a wet blanket for the fans in the nosebleed section who thought Sosa was landing successfully. Sosa, 35-3-2 (26), landed just 79 of 565 total punches for a 14 percent connect rate, and worse yet, only 12 of 182 jabs, for seven percent. For his part, Mayweather landed 55 percent of his total punches thrown (248 of 448) and 60 percent of his jabs (147 of 246).

Mayweather, the WBC super featherweight titleholder from October 1999 until April 2002, had been calling out world 154-pound monarch Oscar De La Hoya. But following his scrap with Sosa, Mayweather, nursing a swollen left hand, said he would likely face WBC mandatory challenger Juan Lazcano next, then perhaps face the winner of the May 17 unification bout between Spadafora and WBA titlist Leonard Dorin.

"He was easy work," Mayweather said. "He threw more shots, I landed more shots. He was strong in rounds one through six, then he tired. I hurt my hand when I hit him in the head. I stepped it up the last couple of rounds."

Sosa, like the Fresno crowd, saw it differently.

"I got robbed," Sosa said. "I hit him whenever I wanted. I did what I wanted to do. I want a rematch right now."

Television: HBO

Promoters: Top Rank, George Chung's American Champion Sports

(4-19-03)

Mike Houser

PHOTO BY CHRIS FARINA

Sosa tries to slip a Mayweather jab

Rosendo Alvarez W 12 Bebis Mendoza

Little Rock, Arkansas: It's likely that if Alvarez and Mendoza fought 100 times, neither would ever establish clear superiority over the other, but Alvarez did enough at the Statehouse Convention Center to convince two judges of his slight superiority in his third meeting with his Colombian rival. After being disqualified for low blows in their close first fight and winning a split decision by a single point in the rematch, Alvarez took a narrow but deserved majority decision in the rubber match. It marked the Nicaraguan's second successful defense of the WBA light flyweight title and, more significantly, it earned him the vacant RING championship at 108 pounds.

The taller Mendoza, 107½, got off to the far better start, using his reach advantage to jab and keep Alvarez, 108, on the outside throughout much of the first four rounds. Alvarez may have snuck in enough short left hands to steal the third round, but otherwise, the first third of the fight belonged to Mendoza.

By the fifth, however, "El Bufalo" was stepping up the pressure, and the 28-year-old Mendoza was retreating and allowing himself to be pinned on the ropes. In the seventh, Alvarez suffered a strange cut on the back of his head that would bleed profusely the rest of the fight, while Mendoza picked up a gash along his left eyelid. With both men covered in blood (most of it Alvarez'), the fight grew sloppy in spots. Mendoza seemed to be tiring, but he did land an excellent right hand to the ear in the eighth to slow the 32-year-old Nicaraguan's momentum.

The last few rounds went back and forth, with Alvarez, 32-2-1 (21), charging in to some effect, and Mendoza, 28-2 (23), outboxing him in spurts. Neither man was ever badly hurt, but Alvarez appeared to have rallied strongly enough after his slow start to eke it out. The judges certainly thought so, as Oscar Perez (Dominican Republic) and Russ Perrymore (USA) both had it 116-112 for El Bufalo, while Sonny Ingram (USA) scored it even at 114-114.

The referee was Elmo Adolph (USA).

Television: HBO Pay-Per-View

Promoter: DiBella Entertainment

(3-31-03)

Markus Beyer W 12 Eric Lucas

Leipzig, Germany: The complaints that came from the Canadian camp at the end of 12 rounds in which Lucas, 166¼, felt he had done more than enough to retain the WBC super middleweight title in his fourth defense seemed justified. For much of the bout he had outworked and outpunched former titleholder Beyer, 167¼, Germany, whose split decision victory perhaps owed plenty to the bout being held in the Leipzig Arena.

That was certainly how Lucas' manager, Yvon Michel, who lost the purse bid by $14,200, viewed the verdict. Lucas had grave reservations about taking on Beyer in Germany. His uneasiness was proven to be justified with the German corner benefiting from having the judges' scores relayed to them by television between rounds, which formed part of the official protest lodged by Team Lucas with the WBC afterward.

The two 31-year-olds engaged predominantly on the outside. Beyer was determined to utilize his southpaw jab and lateral movement and less keen to get involved in the kind of exchanges Lucas might have favored. But the defending titlist was doing all of the productive work, and the punch stats, never wholly reliable but significant nonetheless, had him outscoring Beyer two-to-one over many of the opening eight rounds. The German tried to win these rounds by opening up in the final minute of each, but Lucas was sure that his more consistent effort would be rewarded.

PHOTO BY SUMIO YAMADA

Beyer connects with a right en route to controversial decision win

The most telling combination of a far-from-compelling bout was landed by Lucas in the fifth, and Beyer was knocked unsteady for a moment. But he regrouped and reverted to keeping Lucas at distance, the Canadian growing increasingly frustrated by Beyer's reluctance to throw much more than his southpaw jab. Indeed, over the closing rounds, Beyer may have benefited from Lucas' mental lethargy. He was allowed back in at a point when Lucas ought to have been making sure of his victory.

But the scoring still came as a surprise. Judges Franco Ciminale (Italy) and Chuck Hassett (USA) had it 116-113 for Beyer, while John Keane (England) had it for Lucas, 115-114. THE RING scored 116-113 for Lucas. The referee was Laurence Cole (USA).

Promoter: Wilfried Sauerland

(4-5-03)

Brian Doogan

Derrick Gainer W 12 Oscar Leon

Las Vegas, Nevada: Gainer is generally regarded as more of a boxer-mover than a puncher, so it was something of a surprise when he struggled to outbox little-known Leon, yet used a pair of one-punch knockdowns to pull out the win. Still, Gainer didn't really get what he needed, despite a split decision victory over Leon at the MGM Grand Garden on the Marco Antonio Barrera-Kevin Kelley undercard.

Gainer, making his third defense of the WBA featherweight belt, was openly campaigning for a bout against either Barrera or Erik Morales, the two big names in the division. But despite his knockdowns, the crowd was not pleased and booed his performance lustily. Gainer fought much of the fight going away from Leon in a less-than-pleasing style.

PHOTO BY CHRIS FARINA

Southpaws Gainer and Leon joust

"I gave those guys reasons not to fight me," a glum Gainer said afterward. "I fought all right, and I hope this will do it for me, but I don't know."

Leon was downright angry after the bout. He was not only upset with judges Duane Ford (USA) and Silvestre Abainza (Philippines), he also wasn't happy with referee Kenny Bayless (USA). Leon, 126, Colombia, contended Bayless let Gainer, 126, Pensacola, Florida, get away with a string of low blows and said the first of the two knockdowns came as a result of a punch below the beltline. Televised replays, though, seemed to indicate it was a good punch.

"I got screwed," Leon, 24-3 (16), said. "What fight was that guy watching? The referee didn't warn him about any low blows. He hit me low the first time I went down. I told the ref, and he ignored me."

Abainza scored the fight 117-110 for Gainer, while Ford favored the Floridian 114-112. Carol Castellano (USA) had it 114-112 for Leon. THE RING's card was 113-113.

Leon, 29, pressed the fight from start to finish, but he was less effective as time wore on. Gainer, 30, blocked a large number of his shots and made him miss with many others.

Gainer knocked Leon down with the disputed bodyshot in the eighth, then floored him again with an excellent right hook counter in the 10th. Though it was hardly a vintage performance, it was enough to keep Gainer in the hunt for a big-money battle.

"I'm not going to stand here and tell you I fought the greatest fight I've ever fought, but I did a lot of good things," Gainer, 39-5-1 (24) with 1 no-contest, said. "And you have to give him credit, too. He's a tough guy. I did what I could. I wasn't maybe as sharp as I'd hoped I would be, but he took some good shots."

Promoter: Forum Boxing
Television: HBO Pay-Per-View
(4-12-03)
Kevin Iole

Antonio Tarver W 12 Montell Griffin

Ledyard, Connecticut: Tarver has long been salivating over the prospect of getting it on with Roy Jones. As he continues to wait, however, Tarver instead settled for a fight with the man who had handed the sensational Jones the lone defeat of his career, albeit a controversial disqualification loss from six years ago.

Nonetheless, Griffin, 44-4 (29), was considered enough of a challenge by a couple of the sport's sanctioning bodies that they declared the light heavyweight affair at Foxwoods Casino a "championship" fight. So, they dragged both the vacant IBF and WBC belts—recently stripped from Jones—into the ring for this clash on the undercard of James Toney-Vassiliy Jirov.

But by the end of the night, there was only one belt that really counted, and it wasn't even the coveted RING belt (which is still held by Jones). It was the left-handed belt that Tarver, 21-1 (17), cracked Griffin with all night.

As early as the first round, it was apparent that the 5'7" Griffin would fail to solve two most puzzling predicaments. Not only would he be troubled by the vast reach advantage of the 6'2" Tarver, but he would be equally clueless when it came to figuring out his tricky southpaw stance. So Griffin was on the outside of the affair all night, especially when it came to any kind of winning hopes.

Although Griffin, 175, Las Vegas, Nevada, seemed intent to cut the distance in the opening minutes of the fight, lunging in on the rangy Tarver, he paid the price for it at the end of the first round. After missing wildly, Griffin caught a left that landed on the side of the head and sent him reeling to the canvas in the corner of the ring. Griffin was up by five, but he never seemed to recover fully from the knockdown. Tarver, 175, Orlando, Florida, feasted on him over the next 11 rounds, carving up his face like a baked turkey. The recipe for this was simple: a taut right jab backed up by straight, hard lefts.

While Griffin had few answers in return, his corner remained active in sealing up the nasty gouge above his right eye that opened up from a slashing left in the seventh. A round later, they were working on a cut above his left eye as well.

By the 11th round, Griffin, 32, was winging wild, desperate haymakers, but to no avail. This one was headed for the three-man jury,

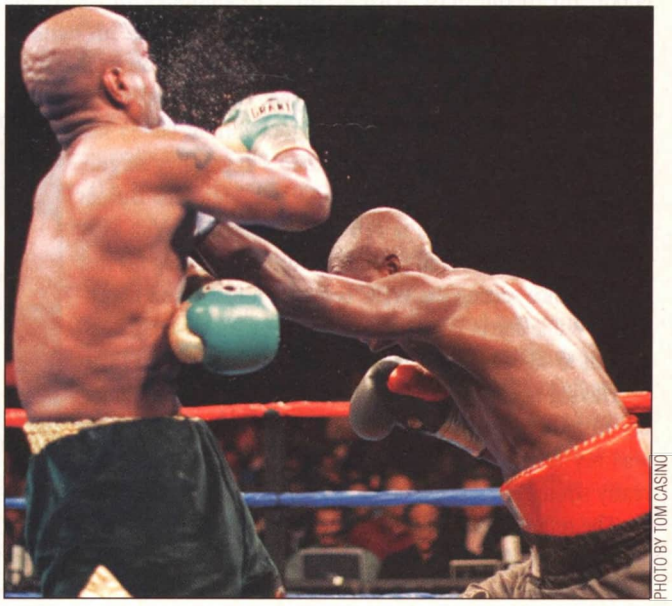

PHOTO BY TOM CASINO

Tarver rocks Griffin with a southpaw left

but not without an exciting finale first. In the waning seconds of the fight, Tarver unloaded the best belt of the night—a rocketing left hand—that found its way straight to Griffin's chin. After a brief delay, Griffin buckled and fell flat on his seat with only about 20 seconds to go.

Griffin rose again on shaky legs and was greeted by a punishing onslaught. Referee Michael Ortega (USA) stepped in to halt the bout, but the bell beat him to it, and Tarver, 34, was deprived of a knockout victory by a matter of a split second.

It hardly mattered. The judges' scorecards that were announced next were as decisive as any knockout could ever be. While all three of them (Americans George Smith, Steve Epstein, and John Lawson) saw it the same exact way, 120-106, it wouldn't be the only unanimous opinion on this night. Belts or no belts, everyone agreed that Tarver is the baddest contender on the light heavyweight block.

Television: HBO

Promoter: DiBella Entertainment

(4-26-03)

Ted Bodenrader

Oscar Larios W 12 Shigeru Nakazato

Tokyo, Japan: Mexican banger Larios, 122, barely kept the WBC super bantamweight belt, despite dominating the early stages of his fight with Nakazato, 122, Japan. After five rounds, Larios held a lead of seven points on two judges' cards, but Nakazato staged a furious rally, forcing the titleholder to use desperate hit-and-grab tactics to last the distance. In the end, Larios won a unanimous decision over 12 hot frames at Ryogoku Sumo Arena.

Rafael Mendoza, the business manager of Larios, revealed that the titlist had suffered a broken jaw and had to be taken immediately to the hospital after the fight without any press interview.

"It happened in the ninth when he took Nakazato's well-timed left hook to the jaw," Mendoza said. "After that, he complained of pain, so he had to jab and move without mixing it up."

The taller, faster, and more skillful Larios was probably expecting an easy payday, and he seemed on the way to one when he sent Nakazato to the deck with a flurry of punches in the fifth. Nakazato, however, was saved by the bell, and showed his tremendous recuperation as he almost toppled the Mexican in the sixth and eighth. Fighting with a broken jaw, Larios was forced to make constant use of his jab and footwork to barely last the final three rounds against Nakazato's aggressive surge.

Judges Tony Castellano (USA) and Malcolm Bulner (Australia) both scored it 116-110, while Gale Van Hoy (USA) had it 114-111, all for Larios, who was making his first defense since seizing the WBC belt with a first-round knockout of Willie Jorrin last November. Larios, 26, raised his credentials to 48-3-1 (33), while Nakazato, 30, fell to 23-6 (18).

Having needed to call on all of his experience and bravery to pull out the win, Larios confessed afterward, "This was my toughest fight I ever experienced. Nakazato was really strong."

The referee was Toby Gibson (USA).

Promoter: Akihiko Honda's Teiken Promotions

(4-26-03)

Joe Koizumi

Ricky Hatton W 12 Vince Phillips

Manchester, England: Some of the questions about quality and ability to mix it with the most hardened operators in the 140-pound division were answered in a dominating display by unbeaten junior welterweight Hatton, 139½, against the veteran Phillips, 140, at the MEN Arena in Hatton's hometown. The 24-year-old Englishman punished Phillips severely and it was only the former titlist's courage and experience that enabled him to last the distance.

Despite winning handily, technical flaws were apparent in Hatton, and his susceptibility to dangerous right hand blows would no doubt be exploited by Kostya Tszyu, the undisputed master at this weight. He was cut around his eyes, too. As early as the opening round, blood flowed ominously from a wound on his right eyelid. His corner managed to stem the flow, but if the 39-year-old Phillips had been a few years younger, he may have visited more than passing discomfort on Hatton.

"I've heard a lot about his age, but if you didn't know he was 39 and had seen him in his last fight against Sharmba Mitchell, whom he boxed to a split decision, you wouldn't believe he was anywhere close to 40," Hatton argued. "His recovery and heart were unbelievable. I couldn't believe he was taking the amount of punishment to the body that he took. But I showed I can take a good shot to the chin. A right uppercut in the fourth round made my legs ping for about 10 seconds before my head cleared and I quickly got over it. You can put a tick next to my chin now. I proved that tonight."

That uppercut clearly stunned Hatton, and there were enough overhand rights that pierced his defenses to have reason to doubt his ability to ship such blows against a younger, more energetic opponent. But Phillips was battling more than age. The Las Vegas-based veteran arrived in Britain just three days before the fight and split with promoter Sugar Ray Leonard during a chaotic build-up. To make the weight, he was forced to strip naked, and at one point he even put his clothes back on in the dressing room and threatened to call the fight off before promoter Frank Warren satisfied his financial demands.

Ultimately, he showed plenty of fight and had Hatton cut by the end of the opening round with a right-left-right combination. What he lacked, however, was the conditioning to sustain his effort. In

PHOTO BY TOM CASINO/SHOWTIME

Hatton pins Phillips on the ropes and hooks away

the second round, he got cut by his right eye, and by the fifth Hatton's punishing body assault had left him seriously depleted, the Manchester fighter ripping in vicious two-handed assaults for the duration. A hard right to the head had Phillips, 44-8-1 (32), reeling in the ninth. He fell to the floor, but referee Ian John-Lewis (England) ruled it a slip. Phillips, though, was not able to slip much else.

Howard Goldberg (South Africa) scored 119-109, Reg Thompson (Enlgand) 120-107, and Des Bloyd (Australia) 120-108, all for Hatton. THE RING also scored for Hatton, 118-109. Hatton, 32-0 (24), and Italy's Gianluca Branco were being lined up for a possible summer bout for the WBC interim title because of Tszyu's reluctance to grant a bout to Branco, his mandatory challenger.

Television: Showtime
Promoter: Sports Network
(4-5-03)
Brian Doogan

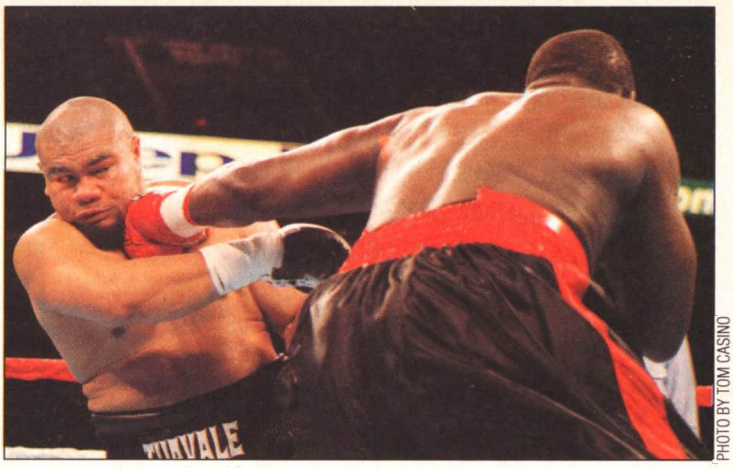
PHOTO BY TOM CASINO

Rahman used his jab to dictate the distance against Tua

Hasim Rahman D 12 David Tua

Philadelphia, Pennsylvania: They both sat on the dais at the postfight press conference dumbfounded. Neither Rahman nor Tua could understand how their 12-round heavyweight eliminator at the First Union Spectrum ended in a draw. Both 30-year-old fighters were disappointed to be heading home without an additional win on their records.

Rahman, who came in at a career-high 259½ pounds, pointed to the higher volume of punches he landed on the 245-pound Tua in arguing his case. The New Zealand-based Samoan slugger countered with the insistence that he landed the heavier punches and that he dominated the middle rounds against the former world champion from Baltimore, Maryland. But just as in their first fight, which Tua won by controversial 10th-round TKO in December '98, the final result was inconclusive.

Judge Bill Clancy (USA) had it 116-112 for Rahman, while Robert Grasso (USA) had it 116-112 for Tua. George Hill (USA) saw it even at 114-114, thus giving both fighters their first pro draw. THE RING scored the fight for Rahman, 115-113.

"I'm speechless," said Rahman, 35-4-1 (29). "There's no way to justify this. I feel like I beat him twice, but I got no victories."

Tua was upset because he thought he landed the harder shots. Which he did. Only less often.

"I thought I did enough to win," said Tua, 42-3-1 (37). "But I waited too much. I was looking to counterpunch. I had him going two or three times, but I just didn't capitalize on the moment."

Most prognosticators foresaw "The Rock" getting knocked out. Rahman had fired trainer Bouie Fisher while preparing for the fight, and his weight was reported to have ballooned up to around 280 coming into camp. Tua, meanwhile, was on a four-fight win streak after his disappointing loss to Chris Byrd in '01.

Yet it was Rahman who set the early pace, scoring with a steady jab and winning the first three rounds. Firing a clean, straight right behind the jab, Rahman had Tua's nose bleeding by the end of the third. That may have been the motivation Tua needed to start throwing punches.

Tua began to connect with his dangerous left hook more consistently from the fourth through the eighth rounds. "Tuaman" tested Rahman's resolve by rattling the ex-champ with an overhand right and left hook in the fifth.

Rahman withstood the pounding and began reestablishing his jab in the eighth. As the fight wore on, Tua's activity slowed, while Rahman, regardless of the added weight, appeared stronger. Rahman even managed to put Tua on the canvas for the first time in the iron-chinned Samoan's career, although it came from a punch that landed just after the bell ending the 12th round, and thus didn't count. As it was, Tua won the final round of two of the three cards, enabling him to pull out the draw.

The referee was Rudy Battle (USA).
Television: HBO
Promoter: Don King Productions
(3-29-03)
Joseph Santoliquito

Salim Medjkoune W12 Vincenzo Gigliotti

Clermont-Ferrand, France: There was little by way of fireworks for the crowd in the Maison des Sports, but Medjkoune, 121¼, France, was still satisfied with his night's work as he retained the WBA super bantamweight title for the first time. Gigliotti, 121¼, Italy, was easily overcome if not overwhelmed, and the unanimous decision awarded to the Frenchman was deserved.

The 30-year-old challenger was determined and battled through several head clashes and cuts, but Medjkoune was equally focused on holding onto the belt he won against Osamu Sato in Japan in October '02. Not the biggest puncher in the 122-pound division, the 31-year-old southpaw relies mostly on his skills, and they proved of sufficient quality to convince all three judges that he was the superior man.

His only period of crisis came in the sixth round when, in a rash moment, he butted Gigliotti, 23-4 (14), and was promptly docked a point by the referee. But it made no difference when the cards were tabulated. Medjkoune, 41-3-1 (21), controlled the final four rounds to secure a victory by scores of 116-111 (Japan's Kazumasa Kuwata), 115-113 (Denmark's Ove Ovesen) and 117-112 (Panama's Artur Sanchez). The referee was Luis Pabon (Puerto Rico).

Promoter: AB Stars
(4-4-03)
Brian Doogan ■

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July 1984: Donald Curry: "I'm Better Under Pressure." Color Pinup: Gerrie Coetzee. Interview: Curry. Also: Pipino Cuevas, John Mugabi, Bill Costello, M. Spinks-Davis.

Aug. 1984: WBC Heavyweight Champion Terrible Tim Witherspoon: A Superstar Of Tomorrow? Color Pinup: Rocky Lockridge. Interview: Sugar Ray Leonard. Also: Marvin Hagler, Gomez-LaPorte.

Oct. 1984: Golden Boy Mark Breland: Can He Be The Next Sugar Ray? Color Pinup: Jaime Garza. Interview: Aaron Pryor. Also: Bramble-Mancini, Sugar Ray Leonard.

Nov. 1984: Thomas Hearns: "Hagler Is Shakin' Like A Leaf On A Tree!" Color Pinup: Tim Witherspoon. Interview: Livingstone Bramble. Also: Rosario-Davis, Marlon Starling.

Jan. 1985: The Wide-Open Heavyweight Division: Who Will Take Control? Color Pinup: Bill Costello. Interview: Tyrone Crawley. Also: Harry Arroyo, Curry-Pryor, Barry McGuigan.

Feb. 1985: Gerry Cooney: How Far Can He Go This Time? Color Pinup: Michael Spinks. Interview: Ray Mancini. Also: Dream fights, Hector Camacho.

March 1985: Next For Marvelous Marvin Hagler: The Only Fight That Really Matters. Color Pinup: Mike McCallum. Interview: Thomas Hearns. Also: Santos-Medal, Meza-Garza, Holmes-Bonecrusher.

May 1985: Thomas Hearns: *KO* Fighter Of The Year. Color Pinup: Gerry Cooney. Also: Camacho-Ramirez, Truth Williams, Year In Review.

July 1985: Aaron Pryor: Has Hawk Time Run Out? Color Pinup: Donald Curry. Interview: Greg Page. Also: Ray Mancini, James Shuler, Costello-Hatcher.

Aug. 1985: King Cobra: "Hagler-Hearns Is Done And I'm Better Than Both Of Them!" Color Pinup: John Mugabi. Interview: Bobby Czyz. Also: Larry Holmes, Roberto Duran, De-Witt-Lee.

Oct. 1985: Still Champ After All These Years: Larry Holmes—A Legend Continues To Grow. Interview: Mark Breland. Also: Michael Spinks, Milton McCrory, Wilfredo Gomez.

Nov. 1985: McGuigan! The Pluck Of The Irish. Also: Julio Cesar Chavez, Thomas-Weaver, Donald Curry, featherweights.

Dec. 1985: Pinklon Thomas: "Larry Holmes Betrayed Boxing." Color Pinup: Hagler-Mugabi. Also: Mike McCallum, Tyrell Biggs, Camacho-Ramirez.

Jan. 1986: Macho Mania! Hector Camacho Takes Aim At 10 Tough Targets. Color Pinup: Jimmy Paul. Interview: Alexis Arguello. Also: Truth Williams, Curry-McCrory.

Feb. 1986: King Michael: How Long Will He Rule The Heavyweights? Also: Barry McGuigan, Shawn O'Sullivan, Spinks-Holmes, *Rocky IV,* world's best fighter poll.

July 1986: Tyson, McGuigan, Hagler: The Stars Catch Fire And Boxing Is Hot Again! Color Pinup: Azumah Nelson. Also: Camacho-Chavez.

Oct. 1986: They're Back!!! The Cooney Circus Returns. Interview: Sugar Ray Leonard. Also: Jimmy Paul, Mike Tyson, Donald Curry.

Dec. 1986: Larry Holmes' Message To Mike Tyson: "Show Me You Can Kick My Butt!" Color pinup: Mark Breland. Interview: Holmes. Also: Witherspoon-Bruno, Evander Holyfield, Cruz-McGuigan, Danny Lopez.

Feb. 1987: Upset Of The Decade: Has Honeyghan Cut Short The Curry Era? Color Pinup: Marvin Johnson. Interview: Bobby Czyz. Also: Edwin Rosario, Hector Camacho.

May 1987: Hagler vs. Leonard—The Clash Of The Superstars: Who Will Win And Why. Color Pinup: Edwin Rosario. Interview: Greg Haugen. Also: Bobby Czyz, Tyson & Bonecrusher.

June 1987: New WBA Welterweight Champion Mark Breland: He's Got A Lot To Smile About. Interview: Marvin Hagler. Color Pinup: Greg Haugen. Also: Michael Olajide, Carlos Monzon.

Aug. 1987: Sweet Victory! Sugar Ray Humbles Hagler. Color Pinup: Leonard vs. Hagler. Interview: Evander Holyfield. Also: Spinks-Cooney preview, Donald Curry.

Oct. 1987: Greatness Beckons: When Will Mike Tyson Answer The Call? Color Pinup: Michael Olajide. Interview: Tyrell Biggs. Also: Paz-Haugen, Marvin Hagler.

Nov. 1987: Michael Spinks: The War With Tyson Is Okay With Him. Color Pinup: Vinny Pazienza. Interview: Frankie Duarte. Also: Matthew Hilton, Hagler-Czyz.

Dec. 1987: Mike Tyson: Undisputed Heavyweight King—But Is He Losing His Loyal Subjects? Color Pinup: Matthew Hilton. Interview: Barry McGuigan. Also: Aaron Pryor, Mike McCallum.

Jan. 1988: The Collapse Of A Hero: Why Breland Never Hit The Mark Of Greatness. Color Pinup: Michael Spinks. Interview: Aaron Pryor. Also: Michael Nunn, Alexis Arguello, lightweights.

Feb. 1988: Pazienza & Haugen Go For Each Other's Throats. Color Pinup: Marlon Starling. Interview: Bob Arum. Also: Tate-Olajide, ESPN Boxing.

May 1988: *KO* Exclusive—Mike Tyson, As Only Mike Tyson Knows Him. Color Pinup: Mike McCallum. Interview: Thomas Hearns. Also: Tyson-Spinks poll, Michael Dokes, Virgil Hill.

July 1988: Superfight History Dictates: Don't Expect The Expected From Tyson-Spinks. Color Pinup: Roger Mayweather. Interview: Dr. Ferdie Pacheco. Also: Roberto Duran, Azumah Nelson, Barkley-Olajide.

Aug. 1988: Tyson-Spinks: *KO's* Fearless Forecast Of Superfight '88. Color Pinup: Buddy McGirt. Interview: Matthew Hilton. Also: Lockridge-Knight, Evander Holyfield, Lloyd Honeyghan.

Sept. 1988: Tyson-Spinks, The Aftermath—What If Tyson Wins; What If Spinks Wins? Color Pinup: Frank Tate. Interview: Marlon Starling. Also: Barry McGuigan, Simon Brown, risk-taking.

Oct. 1988: Middleweight Terrorism: Iran Bombs The Hit Man. Color Pinup: Don Lalonde. Interview: Frank Bruno. Also: Roger Mayweather, Marvin Hagler.

Dec. 1988: Sugar Ray's Comeback: Why? Color Pinup: Simon Brown. Interview: Kevin Rooney. Also: Michael Nunn, best fighter poll, welterweight wars.

Jan. 1989: The Troubled Times Of Mike Tyson. Color Pinup: Lloyd Honeyghan. Interview: Gil Clancy. Also: Meldrick Taylor, Jeff Fenech, Boxing's Champs.

Feb. 1989: George Foreman Is Born Again. Color Pinup: Meldrick Taylor. Interview: Bill Cayton. Also: The Olympics, Davey Hilton, John Mugabi, Barry McGuigan.

Aug. 1989: Special 100th Issue. Color Pinup: Hagler vs. Hearns. Also: The *KO* Years, 50 most influential people, '80s ratings, best of *KO* Interview, year-by-year review, Sugar Ray Robinson.

Sept. 1989: "I Beat Up Tyson Before, I'll Do It Again," by Carl Williams. Color Pinup: Michael Nunn. Also: Chavez-Mayweather, Brian Mitchell, Marv Albert.

Feb. 1990: George Foreman Risks A Multimillion-Dollar Shot At Tyson. Color Pinup: Brian Mitchell. Interview: Riddick Bowe. Also: Simon Brown, Molina-Lopez, East vs. West.

June 1990: A Sugar-Free Future? Thomas Hearns Is Looking Up. Color Pinup: Glenn McCrory. Interview: Michael Moorer. Also: Matthew Hilton, Molina-Suarez, Foreman-Cooney, Camacho-Paz.

July 1990: *KO* Interview—Sugar Ray Leonard. Color Pinup: Jorge Paez. Also: Michael Nunn, Buster Douglas, Jibaro Perez, the Olympians.

Aug. 1990: Meldrick Taylor: Brilliance In Defeat. Color Pinup: Buster Douglas. Interview: Teddy Atlas. Also: Buddy McGirt, Dokes-Ruddock, Simon Brown.

Sept. 1990: *KO* Interview—Buster Douglas. Color Pinup: Macho Camacho. Also: Thomas Hearns, Nigel Benn, Greg Haugen, Boxing Hall of Fame.

Oct. 1990: Send In The Clown: Is Jorge Paez A Phenom Or A Fraud? Color Pinup: Paul Banke. Interview: Tony Lopez. Also: Chavez-Taylor II, Jesse Benavides.

Nov. 1990: The Comeback Of Mike Tyson: A Crooked Course Straight To The Top. Color Pinup: Tony Lopez. Interview: Don Dunphy. Also: Davis-Breland, Riddick Bowe, federal commission.

Dec. 1990: The Heart Of The Matter: Who Will Survive The Holyfield-Douglas War? Color Pinup: Terry Norris. Interview: Virgil Hill. Also: Michael Carbajal, Ruelas Brothers, best fighter poll.

Jan. 1991: Macho Ado About Nothing? Why Hector Camacho Wants To Be Believed. Color Pinup: Meldrick Taylor. Interview: Irving Rudd. Also: Sugar Ray Leonard, Orlando Canizales, Vinny Pazienza.

Feb. 1991: 10 Fighters To Fear: Boxing's Most Destructive Hitters. Color Pinup: Razor Ruddock. Interview: Ray Mercer. Also: Roberto Duran, Saoul Mamby, Mills Lane, Sugar Ray Robinson.

May 1991: Ruddock Eyes The Big Upset Of Tyson. Color Pinup: Luisito Espinosa. Interview: Jeff Fenech. Also: Virgil Hill, Pernell Whitaker, Alex Ramos, Simon Brown, Buddy McGirt.

June 1991: Exclusive *KO* Interview: Evander Holyfield. Color Pinup: Raul Perez. Also: Norris-Leonard, Charles Williams, champs of 1971 vs. 1991, J.C. Chavez.

July 1991: Riddick Bowe: Is He Destined To Be Heavyweight Champ? Color Pinup: Michael Carbajal. Interview: Buddy McGirt. Also: Bobby Czyz, Buster Douglas, Mark Breland.

Aug. 1991: Desert Storm II: Will The Tyson-Ruddock Rematch Be Different? Color Pinup: Loreto Garza. Interview: Michael Carbajal. Also: Brown-Blocker, Fenech-Nelson preview, Harold Brazier, Yuh-Carbajal.

Sept. 1991: Remember Me? I Won The Fight! What "The Real Deal" Still Has To Deal With. Color Pinup: Ray Mercer. Interview: Eddie Futch. Also: Larry Holmes, southpaw heavyweights, Toney-Nunn, Brown-Taylor.

Oct. 1991: Thomas Hearns Works Another Miracle! Now There Are More Hills Left To Climb. Color Pinup: Humberto Gonzalez. Interview: Mike McCallum. Also: Norris-Curry, Richard Steele, Troy Dorsey.

Nov. 1991: Mike Tyson—The Only Heavyweight That Matters. Color Pinup: Thomas Hearns. Interview: Troy Dorsey. Also: Fenech-Nelson, James Toney, bodypunching.

Dec. 1991: Tyson vs. Holyfield—The Experts Analyze The Elements That Will Decide The Fight. Color Pinup: Joey Gamache. Also: Michael Moorer, Pernell Whitaker, Greg Richardson, Robert Quiroga.

Jan. 1992: The Tyson-Holyfield Showdown: An Exclusive Forecast By George Foreman. Color Pinup: Myung Woo Yuh. Also: Fenech-Nelson, TV announcers, boxing's toughest men, Toney-McCallum.

March 1992: *KO* Interview Mike Tyson: An In-Depth, Toe-To-Toe Talk With Boxing's Biggest Star. Color Pinup: Michael Moorer. Also: Thomas Hearns, Tracy Patterson, Larry Holmes, best fighter poll.

May 1992: Division-By-Division Faceoffs: The Best Of '92 vs. The Best Of '67. Color Pinup: James Warring. Interview: Hector Camacho. Also: Tommy Morrison, Bert Cooper, Gianfranco Rosi.

June 1992: If Not Tyson Or Holyfield, Then Who? Bowe? Moorer? Ruddock? Lewis? Mercer? Color Pinup: James Toney. Interview: Shelly Finkel. Also: Scotty Olson, overrated and underrated fighters, Orlin Norris, Whitaker-Pineda.

July 1992: The Title Reign of Evander Holyfield: A Reason To Hide ... Or A Reason For Pride? Color Pinup: Buddy McGirt. Interview: Julian Jackson. Also: Kelley-Dorsey, Nelson-Fenech, Kennedy McKinney.

Aug. 1992: Bowe Knows The Big Fight: The Top Contender Analyzes Holmes-Holyfield. Color Pinup: Julian Jackson. Interview: Michael Spinks. Also: Thomas Hearns, Blue Horizon, fighting fear, Toney-Barkley, Greg Haugen.

Sept. 1992: Can Tommy Morrison Punch Out The Theory ... White Men Can't Fight. Color Pinup: Welcome Ncita. Interview: Ken Norton. Also: Reggie Johnson, Jimmy Paul, McGirt-Blocker, Ali-Shavers.

Oct. 1992: The Olympics: Golden Memories ... And Golden Futures? Color Pinup: Reggie Johnson. Interview: Bobby Czyz. Also: Genaro Hernandez, Terry Norris.

Nov. 1992: Foreman vs. Holmes: The Fight Evander Holyfield Should Have Prevented. Color Pinup: Iran Barkley. Interview: Joey Gamache. Also: Hector Camacho, Tracy Patterson, Rudy Zavala.

Dec. 1992: The Final Four: Ruddock vs. Lewis, Holyfield vs. Bowe. Color Pinup: Genaro Hernandez. Interview: Lennox Lewis. Also: Whitaker-Pineda, Bowe-Coetzer, Alex Stewart, Gamache-Lopez.

Jan. 1993: Holyfield vs. Bowe: Who Will Win And Why. Color Pinup: Al Cole. Interview: Vinny Pazienza. Also: James Toney, Terrence Alli, Maurice Blocker.

Feb. 1993: Strictly Business: George Foreman Fights For The Love Of It—The Money! Color Pinup: Vinny Pazienza. Interview: George Benton. Also: Tracy Spann, Oba Carr, greatest eras.

March 1993: Not Just Another English Muffin: Lennox Lewis Powers His Way Toward The Title. Color Pinup: Leeonzer Barber. Interview: Emanuel Steward. Also: Reggie Johnson, Lopez-Gamache, USA Network.

May 1993: Recapping The Future: Julio Cesar Chavez' Road To 100-0. Color Pinup: Terry Norris. Interview: Junior Jones. Also: Buddy McGirt, Riddick Bowe, Raul Marquez.

Dec. 1993: The *KO* Feud Rages On: "I Will Torture You!" Says Riddick Bowe To Lennox Lewis. Color Pinup: Kennedy McKinney. Also: Mississippi boxing, George Foreman, Yori Boy Campas , Carbajal-Kim, Morrison-Moorer.

June 1995: The Tug-Of-War Over Mike Tyson. Color Pinup: Wilfredo Vasquez. Interview: Oliver McCall. Also: Alejandro Gonzalez, Alexis Arguello, Kostya Tszyu.

June 1996: Destined For The Hall Of Fame: Who's In, Who's Out. Color Pinup: Wayne McCullough. Interview: Cedric Kushner. Also: Danny Romero, Mark Breland, Dynamite Dozen—the next 12.

Sept. 1996: Tyson vs. Seldon. Don't Bet On This Fight Until You've Read This Story! Color Pinup: Arturo Gatti. Interview: Butterbean. Also: Dana Rosenblatt, '92 Olympians, McGuigan-Pedroza.

Nov. 1996 (Special 88-Page Edition): The *KO* 100. Color Pinup: Terry Norris. Interview: Bob Arum. Also: Roy Jones, Roberto Duran, Joe Cortez.

Dec. 1996: Andrew Golota—Taking The Low Road to Stardom. Color Pinup: Mark Johnson. Interview: Rock Newman. Also: De La Hoya-Gonzalez, Chuck Bodak, bizarre endings, Chavez-Rosario.

Winter 1996: This Is War! Holyfield-Tyson Will Be Explosive ... And Short. Color Pinup: Roy Jones. Interview: Bernard Hopkins. Also: Riddick Bowe, David Reid, Holyfield-Qawi.

Jan. 1997 (Special 88-Page Edition): Bowe-Golota II: Hatred And Vengeance ... It's A Beautiful Thing! Color Pinup: Johnny Tapia. Interview: Lou Duva. Also: Mouse Strauss, heavyweight rematches, Azumah Nelson.

Feb. 1997: *KO*'s 1997 Wish List. Color Pinup: Ike Quartey. Interview: Naseem Hamed. Also: David Tua, Felix Trinidad, Adolpho Washington, Bobby Czyz.

March 1997: Holyfield's Trainer Tells All! An Inside Look At The Upset Of The Year. Color Pinup: Vinny Pazienza. Interview: Sugar Ray Leonard. Also: George Foreman, Lupe Pintor, boxing bill, Floyd Mayweather Jr.

Aug. 1997: Oscar Reaches ... But Can't Grasp The Stars. Color Pinup: Nate Miller. Interview: Hector Camacho. Also: Norris-Trinidad preview, Hall of Fame, Angel Manfredy.

Sept. 1997: A Legitimate Grudge Match! Why Romero-Tapia Could Be The Fight Of The Year. Color Pinup: Oscar De La Hoya. Interview: David Tua. Also: Ike Quartey, George Foreman, top promoters.

Nov. 1997: Filling In The Missing Pieces: What "The Bite" Means To Boxing. Color Pinup: Christy Martin. Interview: Jim Lampley. Also: Vince Phillips, British prospects, Iran Barkley.

Dec. 1997: Johnny Tapia Outshines Danny Romero: The Defining Moment In A "Crazy Life." Color Pinup: Genaro Hernandez. Interview: Frans Botha. Also: Lewis-Akiwande, Don King, Charles Brewer.

Holiday 1997 (Special 88-Page Edition): Holyfield-Moorer II: Can Evander Avenge His Ugliest Defeat? Color Pinup: Vince Phillips. Interview: Mills Lane. Also: Roy Jones, Baby Jake Matlala, Boxing 2000.

Jan. 1998: De La Hoya Humbles The Macho Man: "Oscar's The Best I've Ever Fought." Color Pinup: William Guthrie. Interview: Mark Johnson. Also: Johnny Tapia, Pinklon Thomas, defense.

Feb. 1998: Is Lennox Lewis The World's Best Heavyweight? Color Pinup: Charles Brewer. Interview: Marc Ratner. Also: Otis Grant, Arturo Gatti.

March 1998: Evander Holyfield: For The Real Deal, Lewis Is No Big Deal. Color Pinup: Lou Del Valle. Interview: Lennox Lewis. Also: David Izon, Meldrick Taylor, rapid weight loss.

May 1998: Living Up To The Hype: Sometimes They Do ... Sometimes They Don't. Color Pinup: David Reid. Interview: Best Of ... (Part III). Also: Naseem Hamed, Marty Denkin, women's boxing.

June 1998: Lewis vs. Holyfield: Why The Fight Of The Year Isn't Going To Happen. Color Pinup: Evander Holyfield. Interview: Eddie Futch. Also: Hector Lizarraga, pain, Head-To-Head review.

July 1998: Boxing's Hungry *B.A.D* Boyz: They Only Come Out At Night. Color Pinup: Angel Manfredy. Also: Reggie Johnson, Ike Ibeabuchi, 50 all-time fantasy matchups.

Aug. 1998: Lewis Bombs Out Briggs: Would The WBC Champ Do This To Holyfield? Color Pinup: Keith Mullings. Interview: Shane Mosley. Also: Pernell Whitaker, Marco Antonio Barrera, Roberto Garcia.

Sept. 1998: Can Mike Tyson Make A Successful Comeback? Sugar Ray Leonard Has The Answer. Color Pinup: Michael Grant. Interview: Brad Jacobs. Also: Naseem Hamed, Wayne McCullough, Kirk Johnson.

Oct. 1998: The Ultimate Fantasy Card. Color Pinup: Oscar De La Hoya. Interview: Roy Jones. Also: Brendan Ingle, NYPD boxing, prospect blueprint.

Nov. 1998 The *KO* 100. Color Pinup: Reggie Johnson. Interview: Tim Austin. Also: Cesar Bazan, Spencer Oliver, Bobby Czyz.

Dec. 1998: Winning Fights Is Easier Than Winning Fans: Why Can't We Appreciate Roy Jones? Color Pinup: Tim Austin. Interview: Michael Grant. Also: Christy Martin, Ali Reform Act, one-hit wonders.

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Feb. 1999: Holyfield & Lewis: Did They Hurt Themselves Before They Could Hurt Each Other? Color Pinup: Andrew Golota. Interview: Angel Manfredy. Also: Mismatches, Bobby Czyz on watching fights.

March 1999: Exposed! Is Hamed Really Hector Camacho In Disguise? Color Pinup: Mike Tyson. Interview: Joe Frazier. Also: Zab Judah, Vuyani Bungu, Frankie Randall.

May 1999: The Tyson Of Old ... Or Just An Old Tyson? Color Pinup: Luisito Espinosa. Interview: Fernando Vargas. Also: Antonio Diaz, Sumya Anani, standing eight-count.

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July 1999 (Special 88-Page Edition): De La Hoya vs. Trinidad: The Fight The Public Demands ... But Is It Going To Happen? Color Pinup: David Tua. Interview: Tommy Brooks. Also: Floyd Mayweather, Tony Marshall, best of the century.

Aug. 1999: Lewis vs. Holyfield II: Should We Expect Anything Different Next Time? Color Pinup: Fernando Vargas. Interview: David Reid. Also: Ibeabuchi-Byrd, Melissa Salamone.

Sept. 1999: Mayweather vs. Mosley: Who's The Future Of Boxing? Color Pinup: James Page. Interview: J Russell Peltz. Also: Evander Holyfield, Thomas Hearns, Angel Manfredy.

Oct. 1999 (Special 88-Page Edition): The *KO* 100. Color Pinup: Felix Trinidad. Interview: Jake LaMotta. Also: Tony Ayala, Erik Morales, Junior Jones.

Nov. 1999: De La Hoya vs. Trinidad: "It's Gonna Come Down To Who The Hell Wants It Most!" Color Pinup: David Reid. Interview: Arturo Gatti. Also: Roy Jones, Sugar Shane Mosley, Vassily Jirov.

Dec. 1999: David Reid & Fernando Vargas: Olympic Teammates On A Collision Course! Color Pinup: Zab Judah. Interview: Ike Ibeabuchi. Also: Vitali Klitschko, Antonio Tarver, Mike Tyson.

Holiday 1999 (Special 88-Page Edition): Lewis-Holyfield II: Why We Demand A Knockout! Color Pinup: Sharmba Mitchell. Interview: Paulie Ayala. Also: James Toney, James Page & Terronn Millett, decade review.

Jan. 2000: Fool's Gold? Trinidad May Have Tarnished Oscar's Image Forever! Color Pinup: Paulie Ayala. Interview: Tony Ayala Jr. Also: David Reid, Johnny Nelson.

Feb. 2000: Breakout 2000: Who's Going To Lead The Way In Y2K? Color Pinup: Roy Jones. Interview: Bob Arum. Also: Shane Mosley, Wise-Chavez, Iran Barkley.

March 2000: Mike Tyson: "I'm Tired Of This Crap!" So Are We, Mike! Color Pinup: Vernon Forrest. Interview: James Page. Also: Erik Morales & Naseem Hamed, Diego Corrales, women's boxing.

May 2000: Michael Grant vs. Lennox Lewis—25 Insiders Pick The Winner. Color Pinup: Paul Spadafora. Interview: Dan Goossen. Also: Floyd Mayweather, Johnny Tapia, southpaws.

June 2000: Lewis vs. Grant: Who Will Win ... And Why. Color Pinup: Vitali Klitschko. Interview: Sharmba Mitchell. Also: Shane Mosley, David Izon, 2000 Hall of Fame.

July 2000: Today's Fighters, Tomorrow's Hall Of Famers. Color Pinup: Keith Holmes. Interview: Shane Mosley. Also: Zab Judah, Morales-Barrera, Wayne Braithwaite.

Aug. 2000: Mosley Prepares For Oscar: "It Will Be Like The First Round Of Hagler-Hearns." Color Pinup: Steve Johnston. Interview: Chris Byrd. Also: Vargas-Quartey, Thomas Hearns, Felix Trinidad, common sense vs. cowardice.

Sept. 2000: Now Vargas Is Ready For Trinidad & De La Hoya. Color Pinup: Erik Morales. Interview: Chris Byrd. Also: Trinidad vs. all-time greats, Thomas Hearns, common sense vs. cowardice.

Oct. 2000 (Special 88-Page Edition): The *KO* 100. Color Pinup: Floyd Mayweather. Interview: Stevie Johnston. Also: Clifford Etienne, over-hyped heavyweights.

Nov. 2000: Sugar Rush! Mosley Achieves Superstardom At Oscar's Expense. Color Pinup: Lennox Lewis. Interview: Jay Larkin. Also: David Tua, Oleg Maskaev, Ben Tackie.

Dec. 2000: Mike Tyson vs. Lennox Lewis: 15 Insiders Pick The Winner. Color Pinup: Shane Mosley. Interview: Frank Maloney. Also: Oscar De La Hoya, Bronco McKart, our heroes' heroes.

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Feb. 2001: Fernando Vargas' Internal Battle: If He Can't Win It, He Can't Beat Trinidad. Interview: Evander Holyfield. Also: Derrick Gainer, Roy Jones, Naseem Hamed.

April 2001: Lewis Is Too Much For Tua ... But Could Tyson Do Any Better? Interview: Max Kellerman. Also: Floyd Mayweather, Wladimir Klitschko.

June 2001: Trinidad-Jones: Superfight Or Mismatch? Interview: Virgil Hill. Also: Mayweather-Corrales, Paul Ingle, Davey Hilton, Tyson's relationship with Vargas, Judah, and Mayweather.

Aug. 2001: Sugar Shane Mosley: Too Sweet For The Bad Boy Era? Interview: Richard Steele. Also: Evander Holyfield, Roy Jones, Jesus Chavez.

Oct. 2001: Tito Power—From Fans To Foes ... Everyone's Feeling It! Interview: Lou DiBella. Also: Hasim Rahman, Vargas-Rivera, F.I.S.T.

Dec. 2001: Laila Ali: The Fighter, The Sex Symbol ... The Future Of Women's Boxing? Interview: Laila Ali. Also: Oscar De La Hoya, Tim Austin, Manny Pacquiao, Hector Camacho Jr.

Feb. 2002: Bernard Hopkins: "I Am The American Dream. I Am The American Story." Interview: Wladimir Klitschko. Also: Omar Sheika, Vernon Forrest, Juan Lazcano.

April 2002: After Hitting Rock Bottom ... Lennox Is Back On The Path To Greatness. Interview: Duva Boxing. Also: Zab Judah, Mike Tyson, Thomas Tate.

June 2002: Tyson vs. Lewis: 10-Page Preview & Analysis. Interview: Jameel McCline. Also: *Ali* movie, Dorin vs. Balbi & Ward vs. Leija.

Aug. 2002: Still Crazy After All These Years: Should Mike Tyson Be Allowed To Fight? Interview: Kostya Tszyu. Also: Barrera-Morales II preview, Ayala-Adams, Ricky Hatton.

Oct. 2002: Vernon Forrest vs. Shane Mosley: Two Careers On The Line! Interview: Fernando Vargas. Also: Mayweather-Castillo, Hopkins vs. all-time greats, heavyweight scrap heap.

Dec. 2002: Wladimir Klitschko: Would He Be Too Much For Lennox? Interview: Joe Calzaghe. Also: Barrera-Morales II, Evander Holyfield, Freddie Roach.

Winter 2002: A Realistic Look At Tyson's Comeback: He Can't Make History, But He Can Make Millions. Interview: Micky Ward. Also: Antonio Tarver, Antwun Echols, Acelino Freitas.

March 2003: Oscar De La Hoya—The War That Rages Within. Interview: Klitschko brothers. Also: Kassim Ouma, Eric Morel, holiday gifts.

May 2003: Danger Zone! Will Roy Jones Be Doomed By His Heavyweight Ego? Interview: Buddy McGirt. Also: Gatti-Ward II, Floyd Mayweather, Erik Morales.

July 2003: Boxing's Biggest X-Factor: Can Hopkins Recover From His Self-Inflicted Wounds? Interview: Shane Mosley. Also: Kostya Tszyu, DaVarryl Williamson, 10 best defensive fighters.

Sept. 2003: Sugar Roy? How Jones Rates With The All-Time Greats. Interview: Chris Byrd. Also: Corrie Sanders, Jean-Marc Mormeck, Kermit Cintron.

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New Face

(Continued from page 24)

trying to prove that I could stay in there with him," said the Canadian bantamweight. "It would end up in a streetfight with me kicking him or hitting him low. It was a war every time. But it was all worth it because I'm mentally and physically tougher. Fighting now is a joke compared to that."

Although Steve would prove to be an accomplished boxer, winning five national titles at 112 pounds and a bronze medal at 17 in the Pan-American Games, Jeremy always excelled further. He would win gold as a welterweight in the Commonwealth Games in '98 and a silver at the Pan-Am Games in '99.

"I was pretty much just riding the shadow of my brother the whole time," Steve remembered. "People knew us as the boxing brothers. We came from a big hockey town. But that's what made us special. Everyone's kid played hockey, but we were the Molitors. We were the Canadian boxing champions."

For Steve, the answer to dealing with tragedy has been a simple one. He has maintained a singular focus on boxing and its grounding effect. Training has proven to be his refuge, fighting his escape. The ring may appear as a zone of brutality to the uninitiated, but it remains a sensible realm to Molitor. And since last spring, the vagaries of hooks and uppercuts seem much easier to cope with than the outside world.

"When this stuff happened with my brother, there was a lot on my shoulders and a lot on my mind," said Molitor, 23. "I wanted to be away from people, I wanted to be away from Sarnia. I just wanted to be in the gym more and work out my aggression. I live in the gym. I like to go for long runs and think about what I have to think about and just get it out of my head."

Molitor has spent many long runs thinking about his rapidly evolving career, mourning the loss of Jessica, and lamenting Jeremy and how it all went so desperately wrong. He believes it might have begun after the 2000 Olympics.

Steve lost a spot on the Olympic team after making an ill-fated jump to 126 during the Olympic Trials and suffering a controversial points loss in the finals. Jeremy would see his hopes for Olympic glory evaporate after suffering a hand injury that prevented him from traveling to Sydney.

Afterward, Jeremy found his life stalled by indecisiveness, while Steve abandoned the amateurs after finishing 93-11 and turned pro. It was his longtime amateur coach, Silvio Fex, who suggested Steve seek professional guidance under current trainer Adrian Teoderescu, best known for mentoring Lennox Lewis to gold at the '88 Olympics.

"I've watched Steve since he was 12," Teoderescu said. "Stevie is very talented and has lots of natural ability. But like any good fighter, he needs to be persistent and, so far, he's never had a problem with that. He's a tough kid. He spars with heavyweights in the gym and goes at them. He'll spar with anybody at any weight."

Things quickly changed for Molitor after the alliance with Teoderescu. Ontario-based promoters Orion Sports Management quickly stepped in to sign the young prospect to an exclusive contract and arrange a stipend that would keep him in the gym on a full-time basis. Buoyed by newly found financial backing, Molitor moved to Toronto and literally took up residence in the Atlas Boxing Gym, sleeping in a room that looks out over the training floor. Meanwhile, Teoderescu had Molitor in the gym three times a day.

"Steve knows he's in boxing for only a short period of time, so he's fully committed," observed Allan Tremblay, Orion's CEO. "He eats, sleeps, and breathes boxing. This is the type of kid you have to throw out of the gym."

The triumvirate quickly paid dividends with Molitor earning a shot at the vacant Canadian bantamweight championship in only his 10th fight, against veteran Scotty Olson in February '02. Despite a two-year hiatus from the ring, Olson goaded the Molitor camp into accepting the fight, luring them to his hometown of Edmonton amid a rabidly partisan fan base. Unfazed, Molitor bulldozed Olson, dropping him three times before the carnage was ended in the fifth round.

"It was hard for me to watch," said Teodersecu, who had helped guide Olson to a bronze medal at the same Barcelona games where Lewis had won gold. "I felt sorry for Scott, but they wanted the fight. Steve just destroyed him."

The win against Olson braced Molitor for similar hostilities in England in September '02, when he captured the Commonwealth bantamweight title with a lopsided 12-round decision over Nicky Booth. Molitor had only

two weeks to prepare for the fight, and remembers adopting a siege mentality the moment he arrived.

"It was like a war zone there," recalled Molitor. "These people were crazy. They were drunk and giving me the cutthroat sign when they saw me. They wanted me dead in there. But that's where the mental focus comes in. I had to block it out. I just went in, dropped him in the first round, and outboxed him."

Fighting Booth on short notice proved to be a calculated risk well worth taking. Not only did Molitor return home with the Commonwealth belt, but also it led his brain-trust to believe their fighter is already equipped to unseat any of the division's top contenders. They are looking to adopt a more measured strategy.

"There's no rush with Steve," said Tremblay. "He's only 23 years old. I can see him going another 18 months before we get him a title fight. After two or three more fights, we'll be looking to match him with someone in the top 10."

In the meantime, Teoderescu has kept Molitor sharp by sending his young charge to Mexico last October to train with Erik Morales, the WBC featherweight titlist. After two weeks of intensive sparring, the reports that came back were impressive.

"They said he has great potential and, at 118 pounds, nobody will touch him," said Teoderescu. "They said he has great advantages at bantamweight. He's tall, very skinny, but has a strong build."

Despite his accomplishments, Jeremy's troubles still shadow Molitor's every thought. They speak on the phone at least three times a week, and although Jeremy encourages him to stay strong and drive toward his goals, certain words and emotions remain muted between the two brothers.

"We don't really talk about what happened," confided Molitor. "It's hard sometimes. I wake up some nights crying about it. If I could give up everything I have and have absolutely nothing for the rest of my life to get Jessica back, I would. But I can't change what's been done no matter how wrong it is. And he's my brother, so I love him. People will just have to understand that."

They'll have to understand because there is something that Steve Molitor now understands: that life can change by choices made in the pulse of a second, sometimes irrevocably. ■

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Alphabet Ratings

The Rankings of Boxing's Three International Governing Bodies

WBA RATINGS

(Ratings as of February 2003)

HEAVYWEIGHTS
Champ: Roy Jones (USA)
1. Vitali Klitschko (UKR)
2. David Tua (NZ)
3. Hasim Rahman (USA)
4. John Ruiz (USA)
5. Mike Tyson (USA)
6. Evander Holyfield (USA)
7. Fres Oquendo (PR)
8. Kirk Johnson (CAN)
9. Faruq Saleem (USA)
10. Lamon Brewster (USA)
11. Joe Mesi (USA)
12. Juan Carlos Gomez (CUB)

CRUISERWEIGHTS
Champ: Jean Marc Mormeck (FRA)
1. Vacant
2. James Toney (USA)
3. Virgil Hill (USA)
4. O'Neil Bell (USA)
5. Luis Pineda (PAN)
6. Valery Brudov (RUS)
7. Alexander Gurov (UKR)
8. Daniel Rowsell (AUSTRL)
9. Fabrice Tiozzo (FRA)
10. Louis Azille (GUY)
11. Vincenzo Cantatore (ITA)
12. Alexander Petkovick (GER)

LT. HEAVYWEIGHTS
Unified Champ: Roy Jones (USA)
Champ: Bruno Girard (FRA)
1. Antonio Tarver (USA)
2. Lou Del Valle (USA)
3. Mehdi Sahnoune (FRA)
4. Julio Gonzalez (USA)
5. Manuel Siaca (PR)
6. Montell Griffin (USA)
7. Jorge Castro (ARG)
8. David Telesco (USA)
9. Reggie Johnson (USA)
10. Thomas Hansvoll (NOR)
11. Rodney Moore (USA)
12. Thomas Ulrich (GER)

SUPER MIDDLEWEIGHTS
Champ: Byron Mitchell (USA)
1. Antwun Echols (USA)
2. Anthony Mundine (AUSTRL)
3. David Starie (GB)
4. Mads Larsen (DEN)
5. Mikkel Kessler (DEN)
6. Danilo Haussler (CER)
7. Thomas Tate (USA)
8. Markus Beyer (GER)
9. Nordin Ben Salah (NETH)
10. Syd Vanderpool (CAN)
11. Charles Brewer (USA)
12. Freeman Barr (USA)

MIDDLEWEIGHTS
Unified Champ: Bernard Hopkins (USA)
Champ: William Joppy (USA)
1. Vacant
2. Bert Schenk (GER)
3. Robert Allen (USA)
4. Maselino Masoe (AUSTRL)
5. Morrade Hakkar (FRA)
6. Howard Eastman (GB)
7. Erland Betare (FRA)
8. Evans Ashira (DEN)
9. Hassine Cherifi (FRA)
10. Kingsley Ikeke (NIG)
11. Carl Daniels (USA)
12. Marcos Silvano Diaz (ARG)

SUPER WELTERWEIGHTS
Unified Champ: Oscar De La Hoya (USA)
Champ: Alejandro T. Garcia (MEX)
1. Vacant
2. Rhoshii Wells (USA)
3. Travis Simms (USA)
4. Mamadou Thiam (FRA)
5. Shane Mosley (USA)
6. Santiago Samaniego (PAN)
7. Akira Ohigashi (JAP)
8. J.C. Candelo (COL)
9. Michael Rask (DEN)
10. Shannan Taylor (AUSTRL)
11. Kofi Jantuah (GHA)
12. Nader Hamdan (AUSTRL)

WELTERWEIGHTS
Unified Champ: Ricardo Mayorga (CR)
1. Vacant
2. Thomas Damgaard (DEN)
3. Michael Trabant (GER)
4. Jose Rivera (USA)
5. Vernon Forrest (USA)
6. Carlos Baldomir (ARG)
7. Cory Spinks (USA)
8. Felix Flores (PR)
9. Carlos Quintana (PR)
10. Vince Phillips (USA)
11. Hercules Kyvelos (CAN)
12. Andrew Lewis (GUY)

SUPER LIGHTWEIGHTS
Unified Champ: Kostya Tszyu (AUSTRL)
Champ: Vivian Harris (GUY)
1. Souleyman M'Baye (FRA)
2. Sharmba Mitchell (USA)
3. Ricky Hatton (GB)
4. Oktay Urkal (TUR)
5. Diobelys Hurtado (CUB)
6. Arturo Gatti (USA)
7. Khalid Rahilou (FRA)
8. Gianluca Branco (ITA)
9. Zab Judah (USA)
10. Ener Julio (COL)
11. Randall Bailey (USA)
12. Masakazu Satake (JAP)

LIGHTWEIGHTS
Champ: Leonard Dorin (CAN)
1. Miguel Callist (PAN)
2. Lakva Sim (MON)
3. Juan Lazcano (USA)
4. Raul Balbi (ARG)
5. Steve Johnston (USA)
6. Juan Gomez-Trinidad (PR)
7. Prawet Singwangcha (THAI)
8. Angel Manfredy (USA)
9. Victoriano Sosa (DR)
10. Orlando Salido (MEX)
11. Steve Quinonez (USA)
12. Jaime Rangel (COL)

SUPER FEATHERWEIGHTS
Unified Champ: Acelino Freitas (BRA)
Champ: Yodsanan Nanthachai (THAI)
1. Joel Casamayor (CUB)
2. Julien Lorcy (FRA)
3. Jorge Barrios (ARG)
4. Phillip Ndou (SA)
5. Daniel Attah (NIG)
6. Julio Pablo Chacon (ARG)
7. Jose Miguel Cotto (PR)
8. Silvano Usini (ITA)
9. Javier Jauregui (MEX)
10. Jesus Chavez (MEX)
11. Randy Suico (PHIL)
12. Nobuhito Honmo (JAP)

FEATHERWEIGHTS
Champ: Derrick Gainer (USA)
1. Daniel Seda (PR)
2. Marco Antonio Barrera (MEX)
3. Naseem Hamed (GB)
4. Injin Chi (KOR)
5. Antonio Cermeno (VEN)
6. Chris John (IND)
7. Takashi Koshimoto (JAP)
8. Michael Brodie (GB)
9. Spend Abazi (DEN)
10. Victor Polo (COL)
11. Oscar Leon (COL)
12. William Abelyan (ARM)

SUPER BANTAMWEIGHTS
Champ: Salim Medjkoune (FRA)
1. Vacant
2. Yoddamrong Sithyodthong (THAI)
3. Yober Ortega (VEN)
4. Osamu Sato (JAP)
5. Kozo Ishii (JAP)
6. Somsak Sithchachawan (THAI)
7. Johnny Armour (GB)
8. Paulie Ayala (USA)
9. Nadel Hussein (AUSTRL)
10. Napapol Kiattisachokchai (THAI)
11. Vincenzo Gigliotti (ITA)
12. Mahyar Monshipour (FRA)

BANTAMWEIGHTS
Champ: Johnny Bredahl (DEN)
1. Vacant
2. Hideki Todaka (JAP)
3. Yokthai Sithoar (THAI)
4. Eidy Moya (VEN)
5. Tim Austin (USA)
6. Leo Gamez (VEN)
7. Jose Rojas (VEN)
8. Nobuaki Naka (JAP)
9. Toshiaki Nishioka (JAP)
10. Moises Castro (NIC)
11. Poongsawat Krachingdaen (THAI)
12. Ricardo Vargas (MEX)

SUPER FLYWEIGHTS
Champ: Alexander Munoz (VEN)
1. Vacant
2. Sompichai Pisnurachank (THAI)
3. Katsushige Kawashima (JAP)
4. Joichiro Tatsuyoshi (JAP)
5. Luis Bolano (COL)
6. Masayuki Arinaga (JAP)
7. Meiji C.P. Gym (THAI)
8. Jesus Rojas (VEN)
9. Saen Sor Ploenchit (THAI)
10. Sot Sor Veerapol (THAI)
11. Hideyasu Ishihara (JAP)
12. Mauricio Pastrana (COL)

FLYWEIGHTS
Champ: Eric Morel (USA)
1. Lorenzo Parra (VEN)
2. Masaki Nakamuna (JAP)
3. Damaen Kelly (GB)
4. Mzukisi Sikali (SA)
5. Alexander Mahmutov (RUS)
6. Denkaosaen Kaowitch (THAI)
7. Peter Culshaw (GB)
8. Isidro Garcia (MEX)
9. Hiroshi Nakano (JAP)
10. Tomas Rojas (MEX)
11. Hussein Hussein (AUSTRL)
12. Brahim Asloum (FRA)

LIGHT FLYWEIGHTS
Champ: Rosendo Alvarez (NIC)
1. Bebis Mendoza (COL)
2. Melchor Cob Castro (MEX)
3. Pichit C. Siriwat (THAI)
4. Edgar Velasquez (VEN)
5. Marvin Tampos (PHIL)
6. Eric Ortiz (MEX)
7. Mhikiza Myekeni (SA)
8. Rodel Mayol (PHIL)
9. Tatsuo Kayashida (JAP)
10. Alex Sanchez (PR)
11. Wendyl Janiola (PHIL)
12. Kazuo Okada (JAP)

MINIMUMWEIGHTS
Champ: Noel Arambulet (VEN)
1. Chana Porpaoin (THAI)
2. Joma Gamboa (PHIL)
3. Khulile Makeba (SA)
4. Keitaro Hoshino (JAP)
5. Katzunari Takayama (JAP)

WBC RATINGS

(Ratings as of March 2003)

HEAVYWEIGHTS
Champ: Lennox Lewis (GB)
1. Vitali Klitschko (UKR)
2. Hasim Rahman (USA)
3. Mike Tyson (USA)
4. Evander Holyfield (USA)
5. David Tua (NZ)
6. Lamon Brewster (USA)
7. John Ruiz (USA)
8. Kirk Johnson (CAN)
9. Fres Oquendo (USA)
10. Sinan Samil San (TUR)
11. Wladimir Klitschko (UKR)
12. Juan Carlos Gomez (CUB)
13. Michael Grant (USA)
14. Joe Mesi (USA)
15. Jameel McCline (USA)
16. Lou Savarese (USA)
17. Faruq Saleem (USA)
18. Danny Williams (GB)
19. Jeremy Williams (USA)
20. Lance Whitaker (USA)
21. Frans Botha (SA)
22. Larry Donald (USA)
23. Brian Nielsen (DEN)
24. Andre Purlette (GUY)
25. Clifford Etienne (USA)
26. DaVarryl Williamson (USA)
27. Timo Hoffman (GB)
28. Cedric Boswell (USA)
29. Dimitry Bakhtov (KAZ)
30. Jean Francois Bergeron (CAN)

CRUISERWEIGHTS
Champ: Wayne Braithwaite (GUY)
1. O'Neil Bell (USA)
2. Vincenzo Cantatore (ITA)
3. Louis Azille (DR)
4. James Toney (USA)
5. Sebastiaan Rothmann (SA)
6. Pietro Aurino (ITA)
7. Krysztov Wlodarczyk (POL)
8. Luis Andres Pineda (PAN)
9. Richard LaMontagne (USA)
10. Alexander Petkovic (GER)
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25. Virgil Hill (USA)
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28. Grigory Drozd (RUS)
29. Vincenzo Rossitto (ITA)
30. Valery Brudov (RUS)

LT. HEAVYWEIGHTS
Champ: Roy Jones (USA)
1. Antonio Tarver (USA)
2. Montell Griffin (USA)
3. Clinton Woods (GB)
4. Thomas Ulrich (GER)
5. Jorge Castro (ARG)
6. Julio Gonzalez (USA)
7. Paul Briggs (AUSTRL)
8. Eric Harding (USA)
9. Stipe Drews (CRO)
10. Kamel Amrane (FRA)
11. Tomasz Adamek (POL)
12. Elvir Muriqi (ALB)
13. George Jones (USA)
14. Orlando Rivera (PR)
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17. Robert Stieglitz (GER)
18. Tony Oakey (GB)
19. Laudelino Barros (BRA)
20. Elvis Michailenko (LAT)
21. Alejandro Lakatus (ROM)
22. Silvio Branco (ITA)
23. Rodney Moore (USA)
24. Rocky Torres (USA)
25. Daniel Judah (USA)
26. Zsolt Erdei (HUN)
27. Rodney Toney (USA)
28. Michael Rush (USA)
29. Ron Simms (USA)
30. Adrian Diaconu (CAN)

SUPER MIDDLEWEIGHTS
Champ: Markus Beyer (GER)
1. Eric Lucas (CAN)
2. Danilo Haussler (GER)
3. Mikkel Kessler (DEN)
4. Antwun Echols (USA)
5. Mads Larsen (DEN)
6. Syd Vanderpool (CAN)
7. Yoshinori Nishizawa (JAP)
8. Andre Thysse (SA)
9. Omar Sheika (USA)
10. Charles Brewer (USA)
11. David Starie (GB)
12. Henry Porras (CR)
13. Zafarou Ballogou (TOGO)
14. Glenn Catley (GB)
15. Oscar Bravo (USA)
16. Danny Green (AUSTRL)
17. Anthony Mundine (AUSTRL)
18. Dan Batchelder (USA)
19. Jeff Lacy (USA)
20. Mario Veit (GER)
21. Robin Reid (GB)
22. Brian Magee (GB)
23. Kabary Salem (EGY)
24. Nordin Ben Salah (HOL)
25. James Lubwana (UGA)
26. Jean Paul Mendy (FRA)
27. Enrique Ornelas (USA)
28. Victor Oganov (RUS)
29. Charles Adamu (GHA)
30. Craig Cummings (USA)

MIDDLEWEIGHTS
Champ: Bernard Hopkins (USA)
1. Howard Eastman (GB)
2. Cristian Sanavia (ITA)
3. Robert Allen (USA)
4. Kuvanych Toygonbayev (UZB)
5. Wayne Alexander (GB)
6. Aslan Kodzoev (RUS)
7. Evans Ashira (KEN)
8. Morrade Hakkar (FRA)
9. Erland Betare (FRA)
10. Raymond Joval (HOL)
11. Quentin Smith (USA)
12. Tito Mendoza (PAN)
13. Hassine Cherifi (FRA)
14. Sergey Tatevosyan (RUS)
15. Tokutaro Toyozumi (JAP)
16. Eric Mitchell (USA)
17. Andras Galfi (HUN)
18. Carl Daniels (USA)
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30. Eric Regan (USA)

SUPER WELTERWEIGHTS
Champ: Oscar De La Hoya (USA)
Interim Champ: Javier Castillejo (SPA)
1. Fitz Vanderpool (CAN)
2. Nader Hamdan (AUSTRL)
3. Roman Karmazin (RUS)
4. Kassim Ouma (USA)
5. Akira Ohigashi (JAP)
6. Michael Rask (DEN)
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27. Andrei Pestriaev (RUS)
28. Emmett Linton (USA)
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WELTERWEIGHTS
Champ: Ricardo Mayorga (NIC)
1. Vernon Forrest (USA)
2. Shane Mosley (USA)
3. Thomas Damgaard (DEN)
4. Carlos Baldomir (ARG)
5. Manuel Gomez (MEX)
6. Alexander Vetoux (UKR)
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26. Eduardo Bejarano (ARG)
27. Riad Menasria (ALG)
28. Chris Smith (USA)
29. Christopher Henry (BAR)
30. Freddy Hernandez (MEX)

SUPER LIGHTWEIGHTS
Champ: Kostya Tszyu (AUSTRL)
1. Gianluca Branco (ITA)
2. Ricky Hatton (GB)
3. Arturo Gatti (CAN)
4. Oktay Urkal (TUR)
5. Zab Judah (USA)
6. Omar Weis (ARG)
7. Sharmba Mitchell (USA)
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20. Terrance Cauthen (USA)
21. Diobelys Hurtado (CUB)
22. Junior Witter (GB)
23. Ben Tackie (GHA)
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25. Cosme Rivera (MEX)
26. Ricky Quiles (USA)
27. Mikhail Krivolapov (RUS)
28. Carlos Mairena (NIC)
29. Allan Vester (DEN)
30. Matoki Sasaki (JAP)

LIGHTWEIGHTS
Champ: Floyd Mayweather (USA)
1. Juan Lazcano (USA)
2. Steve Johnston (USA)
3. Jose Luis Castillo (MEX)
4. Julien Lorcy (FRA)
5. Victoriano Damian Sosa (DR)
6. Kengo Nagashima (JAP)
7. Jason Cook (GB)
8. Dennis Laurente (PHIL)
9. David Burke (GB)
10. Juan Diaz (MEX)
11. Julio Diaz (USA)
12. Yuri Romanov (UKR)
13. Aldo Rios (ARG)
14. Steve Quinonez (USA)
15. Bobby Vanzie (GB)
16. Juan Gomez Trinidad (PR)
17. Colin Dunne (GB)
18. Alex Trujillo (PR)
19. Leavander Johnson (USA)
20. Eleazar Contreras (USA)
21. Cristian Bejarano (MEX)
22. Carlos Gerena (PR)
23. Miguel Callist (PAN)
24. Steve Forbes (USA)
25. Sayan Sanchat (RUS)
26. Michael Clark (USA)
27. Ricardo Silva (ARG)
28. Laszlo Herczeg (HUN)
29. Efren Hinojosa (MEX)
30. Michele Delli Paoli (ITA)

SUPER FEATHERWEIGHTS
Champ: Sirimongkol Singmanassuk (THAI)
1. Jesus Chavez (USA)
2. Philip Ndou (SA)
3. Randy Suico (PHIL)
4. Joel Casamayor (CUB)
5. Mzonke Fana (SA)
6. Daniel Attah (NIG)
7. Affif Djelti (FRA)
8. Nate Campbell (USA)
9. Julio Pablo Chacon (ARG)
10. Nobuto Honmo (JAP)
11. Jorge Barrios (ARG)
12. Fernando Trejo (MEX)
13. Ryuhei Sugita (JAP)
14. Kevin Kelley (USA)
15. Miguel Angel Huerta (MEX)
16. Orlando Salido (MEX)
17. Javier Jauregui (MEX)
18. Robbie Peden (AUSTRL)
19. Yongsoo Choi (KOR)
20. Lamar Murphy (USA)
21. Boris Sinitsin (RUS)
22. Pedro Miranda (SPA)
23. Mike Anchondo (USA)
24. Silverio Ortiz (MEX)
25. Daniel Alicea (PR)
26. Humberto Soto (MEX)
27. Alex Arthur (GB)
28. Wilfredo Vazquez (PR)
29. Bobby Pacquiao(PHIL)
30. Steve Luevano (USA)

FEATHERWEIGHTS
Champ: Erik Morales (MEX)
1. Injin Chi (KOR)
2. Michael Brodie (GB)
3. Naseem Hamed (GB)
4. Takashi Koshimoto (JAP)
5. William Abelyan (USA)
6. Manuel Calvo (SPA)
7. Guty Espadas (MEX)
8. Luis Fuentes (MEX)
9. Spend Abazi (DEN)
10. Takalani Noluvo (SA)
11. Zahir Raheem (USA)
12. Rocky Juarez (USA)
13. Cyril Thomas (FRA)
14. Fernando Velardez (MEX)
15. Juan Gerardo Cabrera (ARG)
16. Oscar Leon (COL)
17. Yangsoo Sung (KOR)
18. Wayne McCullough (IRE)
19. Angel Chacon (PR)
20. Hector Velazquez (MEX)
21. Hector Marquez (MEX)
22. George Priest Smalls (USA)
23. Valdemir Pereira (BRA)
24. Frankie Toledo (USA)
25. Dainoshin Kuma (JAP)
26. David Murillo (MEX)
27. Choi Tseveenpurev (MON)
28. Gavin Rees (GB)
29. Ruben Estanislao (MEX)
30. Ray Beltran (MEX)

SUPER BANTAMWEIGHTS
Champ: Oscar Larios (MEX)
1. Kiattisak Chocchoi (THAI)
2. Israel Vazquez (MEX)
3. Nadel Hussein (AUSTRL)
4. Paulie Ayala (USA)
5. Shigeru Nakazato (JAP)
6. Osamu Sato (JAP)
7. Kozo Ishii (JAP)
8. Willie Jorrin (USA)
9. Junichi Watanabe (JAP)
10. Emmanuel Lucero (USA)
11. Lehlo Ledwaba (SA)
12. Akihiro Kanai (JAP)
13. Celestino Caballero (PAN)
14. David Donis (USA)
15. Mahyar Monshipour (FRA)
16. Marcos Licona (MEX)
17. Jose Rojas (VEN)
18. Manabu Fukushima (JAP)
19. Jilrex Laca (PHIL)
20. Art Simonyan (USA)
21. Masakazu Sugawara (JAP)
22. Jose Luis Valbuena (VEN)
23. Youngjin Cho (KOR)
24. Bones Adams (USA)
25. Pastor Maurin (ARG)
26. Fernando Beltran Jr. (MEX)
27. Jaekwang Chung (KOR)
28. Alejandro Barrera (MEX)
29. Hector Julio Avila (DR)
30. Martin Honorio (MEX)

BANTAMWEIGHTS
Champ: Veerapol Sahaprom (THAI)
1. Toshiaki Nishioka (JAP)
2. Diego Morales (MEX)
3. Genaro Garcia (USA)
4. Noel Wilders (GB)
5. Jess Maca (PHIL)
6. David Guerault (FRA)
7. Ricardo Vargas (MEX)
8. Julio Zarate (MEX)
9. Joichiro Tatsuyoshi (JAP)
10. Jhonny Gonzalez (MEX)
11. Tim Austin (USA)
12. Gerardo Martinez (MEX)
13. Jesus Perez (COL)
14. Hugo Dianzo (MEX)
15. Daniel Ponce (MEX)
16. Hideki Todaka (JAP)
17. Julio Gamboa (NIC)
18. Moises Castro (NIC)
19. Heriberto Ruiz (MEX)
20. Sasha Baktin (RUS)
21. Rogelio Galicia (PHIL)
22. Julio Cesar Avila (MEX)
23. Steve Molitor (CAN)
24. Jorge Lacierva (MEX)
25. Miguel Angel Munguia (MEX)
26. Nobuaki Naka (JAP)
27. Eidy Moya (VEN)
28. Hozumi Hasegawa (JAP)
29. Silence Mabuza (SA)
30. Nicky Booth (GB)

SUPER FLYWEIGHTS
Champ: Masamori Tokuyama (JAP)
1. Dimitri Kirilov (RUS)
2. Reynaldo Hurtado (COL)
3. Luis Bolano (COL)
4. Malcolm Tunacao (PHIL)
5. Katsushige Kawashima (JAP)
6. Mauricio Pastrana (COL)
7. Medgoen Singsurat (THAI)
8. Jose Beranza (MEX)
9. Hideyasu Ishihara (JAP)
10. Saen Sor Ploenchit (THAI)
11. Peter Culshaw (GB)
12. Martin Castillo (MEX)
13. Jose Navarro (USA)
14. Felix Machado (VEN)
15. Masaki Kawabata (JAP)
16. Oscar Andrade (MEX)
17. Masayuki Arinaga (JAP)
18. Ricardo Cordoba (PAN)
19. Shin Ogata (JAP)
20. Karim Quibir (SPA)
21. Erick Lopez (MEX)
22. Valerio Sanchez (MEX)
23. Lunga Ntontela (SA)
24. Simphewe Khandisa (SA)
25. Cuauhtemoc Vargas (MEX)
26. Waenpetch Chuwatana (THAI)
27. Neddy Garcia (USA)
28. Eduardo Pacheco (COL)
29. Rolando Gerongco (PHIL)
30. Cesar Lopez (USA)

FLYWEIGHTS
Champ: Pongsaklek Wonjongkam (THAI)
1. Hussein Hussein (AUSTRL)
2. Hiroshi Nakano (JAP)
3. Hidenobu Honda (JAP)
4. Luis Maldonado (MEX)
5. Brian Viloria (USA)
6. Takefumi Sakata (JAP)
7. Damaen Kelly (GB)
8. Tomas Rojas (MEX)
9. Noriyuki Komatsu (JAP)
10. Masaki Nakamuna (JAP)
11. Randy Mangubat (PHIL)
12. Mzukisi Sikali (SA)
13. Alexander Mahmutov (RUS)
14. Lorenzo Parra (VEN)
15. Koji Koyama (JAP)
16. Mimoun Chent (FRA)
17. Brahim Asloum (FRA)
18. Wandee Chor Chareon (THAI)
19. Daisuke Naito (JAP)
20. Hayato Asai (JAP)
21. Yusuke Morishima (JAP)
22. Ramses Patterson (USA)
23. Ivan Hernandez (MEX)
24. Jose Araiza (MEX)
25. Angel Priolo (COL)
26. Jose Lopez Bueno (SPA)
27. Jason Booth (GB)
28. Steffen Norskov (DEN)
29. Ever Briseno (NIC)
30. Glenn Donaire (PHIL)

LIGHT FLYWEIGHTS
Champ: Jorge Arce (MEX)
1. Melchor Cob Castro (MEX)
2. Juanito Rubillar (PHIL)
3. Yosam Choi (KOR)
4. Eric Ortiz (MEX)
5. Tatsuo Hayashida (JAP)
6. Rafael Lozano (SPA)
7. Manuel Vargas (MEX)
8. Roberto Vazquez (PAN)
9. Edgar Cardenas (MEX)
10. Monelisi Myekeni (SA)
11. Marvin Tampos (PHIL)
12. Masato Hatakeyama (JAP)
13. Jesus Martinez (MEX)
14. Joma Gamboa (PHIL)
15. Shingo Yamaguchi (JAP)
16. Agustin Luna (MEX)
17. Bebis Mendoza (COL)
18. Hugo Cazares (MEX)
19. Nerys Espinoza (NIC)
20. Wendyl Janiola (PHIL)
21. Andrea Sarritzu (ITA)
22. Juan Centeno (NIC)
23. Ernesto Castro (NIC)
24. Katsunari Takayama (JAP)
25. Rodrigo Garcia (MEX)
26. Steve Msimango (SA)
27. Jun Kitano (JAP)
28. Liborio Romero (MEX)
29. Samransak Singmanassuk (THAI)
30. Edgar Sosa (MEX)

STRAWWEIGHTS
Champ: Jose Antonio Aguirre (MEX)
1. Khulile Makeba (SA)
2. Isaac Bustos (MEX)
3. Sarikalek O. Eakarin (THAI)
4. Eagle Okuda (JAP)
5. Heriberto Gijon (PHIL)
6. Jaewon Kim (KOR)
7. Rodel Mayol (PHIL)
8. Satoshi Kogumasaka (JAP)
9. Genki Ohnaka (JAP)
10. Juan Palacios (NIC)
11. Mohamed Rachman (INDO)
12. Hiroyuki Abe (JAP)
13. Noel Tunacao (PHIL)
14. Keitaro Hoshino (JAP)
15. Juan Alfonso Keb Baas (MEX)
16. Ernesto Rubillar (PHIL)
17. Hiroshi Nakajima (JAP)
18. Chana Porpaoin (THAI)
19. Ki-Moon Na (KOR)
20. Yutaka Niida (JAP)
21. Ulises Solis (MEX)
22. Hiroshi Matsumoto (JAP)
23. Makoto Suzuki (JAP)
24. Sizwe Sinyabi (SA)
25. Manasak Yootthakit (THAI)
26. Omar Soto (MEX)
27. Namchai Ratanachaigym (THAI)
28. Pornsawan Porpramook (THAI)
29. Ivan Calderon (PR)
30. Oledong Sithsanerchai (THAI)

IBF RATINGS
(Ratings as of April 2003)

HEAVYWEIGHTS
Champ: Chris Byrd (USA)
1. Vacant
2. Fres Oquendo (USA)
3. David Tua (NZ)
4. Hasim Rahman (USA)
5. Vitali Klitschko (UKR)
6. John Ruiz (USA)
7. Evander Holyfield (USA)
8. Kirk Johnson (CAN)
9. Mike Tyson (USA)
10. Wladimir Klitschko (UKR)
11. Lamon Brewster (USA)
12. Clifford Etienne (USA)

CRUISERWEIGHTS
Champ: Vassiliy Jirov (KAZ)
1. James Toney (USA)
2. Vacant
3. O'Neil Bell (USA)
4. Virgil Hill (USA)
5. Kelvin Davis (USA)
6. Vincenzo Cantatore (ITA)
7. Ezra Sellers (USA)
8. Alexander Gurov (UKR)
9. Ravea Springs (USA)
10. Dale Brown (CAN)
11. Kryszstof Wlodarczyk (POL)
12. Jason Robinson (USA)

LT. HEAVYWEIGHTS
Champ: Vacant
1. Antonio Tarver (USA)
2. Vacant
3. Montell Griffin (USA)
4. Julio Gonzalez (USA)
5. Paul Briggs (AUSTRL)
6. Thomas Ulrich (GER)
7. Eric Harding (USA)
8. Clinton Woods (GB)
9. George Jones (USA)
10. Jorge Castro (ARG)
11. Derrick Harmon (USA)
12. Stipe Drews (CRO)

SUPER MIDDLEWEIGHTS
Champ: Sven Ottke (GER)
1. Antwun Echols (USA)
2. Danilo Haussler (GER)
3. Byron Mitchell (USA)
4. Charles Brewer (USA)
5. Mads Larsen (DEN)
6. Markus Beyer (GER)
7. Syd Vanderpool (CAN)
8. Mikkel Kessler (DEN)
9. Andre Thysse (SA)
10. Danny Green (AUSTRL)
11. Mario Veit (GER)
12. Glenn Catley (GB)

MIDDLEWEIGHTS
Champ: Bernard Hopkins (USA)
1. Robert Allen (USA)
2. Vacant
3. Howard Eastman (GB)
4. Raymond Joval (HOL)
5. Carl Daniels (USA)
6. Erland Betare (FRA)
7. Bert Schenk (GER)
8. Tito Mendoza (PAN)
9. Cristian Sanavia (ITA)
10. Evans Ashira (GUY)
11. Bea Diallo (LIB)
12. Julio Garcia (USA)

JR. MIDDLEWEIGHTS
Champ: Winky Wright (USA)
1. Vacant
2. Vacant
3. J.C. Candelo (USA)
4. Alex Bunema (USA)
5. Shane Mosley (USA)
6. Emmett Linton (USA)
7. Bronco McKart (USA)
8. Angel Hernandez (USA)
9. Kassim Ouma (USA)
10. Michael Rask (DEN)
11. Rhoshii Wells (USA)
12. Nader Hamdan (AUSTRL)

WELTERWEIGHTS
Champ: Cory Spinks (USA)
1. Vacant
2. Vacant
3. Thomas Damgaard (DEN)
4. Vernon Forrest (USA)
5. Michele Piccirillo (ITA)
6. James Hare (ENG)
7. Rafael Pineda (COL)
8. Jose Rivera (USA)
9. Jose Celaya (USA)
10. Michele Trabant (GER)
11. Antonio Diaz (MEX)
12. Christian Bladt (DEN)

JR. WELTERWEIGHTS
Champ: Kostya Tszyu (AUSTRL)
1. Vacant
2. Sharmba Mitchell (USA)
3. Oktay Urkal (TUR)
4. Zab Judah (USA)
5. Omar Weis (ARG)
6. Arturo Gatti (USA)
7. Micky Ward (USA)
8. Emanuel Augustus (USA)
9. Ben Tackie (GHA)
10. James Leija (USA)
11. Miguel Cotto (USA)
12. Carlos Vilches (ARG)

LIGHTWEIGHTS
Champ: Paul Spadafora (USA)
1. Vacant
2. Leavander Johnson (USA)
3. Angel Manfredy (USA)
4. Javier Jauregui (MEX)
5. Juan Gomez Trinidad (PR)
6. Jose Luis Castillo (MEX)
7. Juan Lazcano (USA)
8. Steve Johnston (USA)
9. Julien Lorcy (FRA)
10. Victoriano Sosa (DR)
11. Julio Diaz (USA)
12. Steve Quinonez (USA)

JR. LIGHTWEIGHTS
Champ: Carlos Hernandez (USA)
1. Steve Forbes
2. Vacant
3. Joel Casamayor (USA)
4. Jorge Barrios (ARG)
5. Jesus Chavez (USA)
6. David Santos (USA)
7. Nate Campbell (USA)
8. Orlando Salido (MEX)
9. Phillip Ndou (SA)
10. Daniel Attah (USA)
11. Daniel Alicea (USA)
12. Kevin Kelley (USA)

FEATHERWEIGHTS
Champ: Juan Manuel Marquez (MEX)
1. Vacant
2. Vacant
3. Oscar Leon (PR)
4. Marco Antonio Barrera (MEX)
5. William Abelyan (USA)
6. Manuel Medina (MEX)
7. Michael Brodie (ENG)
8. In Jin Chi (KOR)
9. Victor Polo (COL)
10. Guty Espadas (USA)
11. Frankie Toledo (USA)
12. Zahir Raheem (USA)

JR. FEATHERWEIGHTS
Champ: Manny Pacquaio (PHIL)
1. Vacant
2. Vacant
3. Jose Luis Valbuena (ARG)
4. Lehlo Ledwaba (SA)
5. Fernando Velardez (USA)
6. Paulie Ayala (USA)
7. David Donis (USA)
8. Diego Morales (MEX)
9. Enrique Sanchez (MEX)
10. F. Rakkiatgym (THAI)
11. Nadel Hussein (AUSTRL)
12. Emmanuel Lucero (USA)

BANTAMWEIGHTS
Champ: Rafael Marquez (MEX)
1. Vacant
2. Tim Austin (USA)
3. Pete Frissina (USA)
4. Ricardo Vargas (MEX)
5. Jesus Perez (COL)
6. Roger Gonzalez (USA)
7. Genaro Garcia (MEX)
8. David Guerault (FRA)
9. Ratanachai Vorapin (THAI)
10. Jose Aguiniga (USA)
11. Fahsung 3K Battery (THAI)
12. Hugo Dianzo (MEX)

JR. BANTAMWEIGHTS
Champ: Luis Perez (NIC)
1. Vacant
2. Vacant
3. Felix Machado (VEN)
4. Mauricio Pastrana (COL)
5. Luis Bolano (COL)
6. Martin Castillo (MEX)
7. Peter Culshaw (ENG)
8. Vernie Torres (USA)
9. Alexander Mahmutov (RUS)
10. Joichiro Tatsuyoshi (JAP)
11. Adonis Rivas (NIC)
12. Roger Galicia (PHIL)

FLYWEIGHTS
Champ: Irene Pacheco (COL)
1. Vacant
2. Vacant
3. Hussein Hussein (LEB)
4. Damaen Kelly (GB)
5. Alejandro Montiel (MEX)
6. Masaki Nakanuma (JAP)
7. Vic Darchinian (AUSTRL)
8. Kermin Guardia (COL)
9. Wandee Chareon (THAI)
10. Isidro Garcia (MEX)
11. Masaki Kawabata (JAP)
12. Randy Mangubat (PHIL)

JR. FLYWEIGHTS
Champ: Jose Burgos (MEX)
1. Vacant
2. Vacant
3. Fahlan Sakreerin (THAI)
4. Melchor Cob Castro (MEX)
5. Alexander Sanchez (PR)
6. Eric Ortiz (MEX)
7. Wendyl Janiola (PHIL)
8. Bebis Mendoza (COL)
9. Hidenobu Honda (JAP)
10. Tatsuo Hatashida (JAP)
11. Juan Keb Baas (MEX)
12. Dimitri Kirilov (RUS)

MINI FLYWEIGHTS
Champ: Miguel Barrera (MEX)
1. Vacant
2. Vacant
3. Daniel Reyes (COL)
4. Muhammad Rachman (INDO)
5. Chana Porpaoin (THAI)
6. Ivan Calderon (PR)
7. Noel Tunacao (PHIL)
8. Hiroshi Matsumoto (JAP)
9. Ernesto Rubillar (PHIL)
10. Roberto Leyva (MEX)
11. Jaewon Kim (KOR)
12. Joma Gamboa (PHIL)

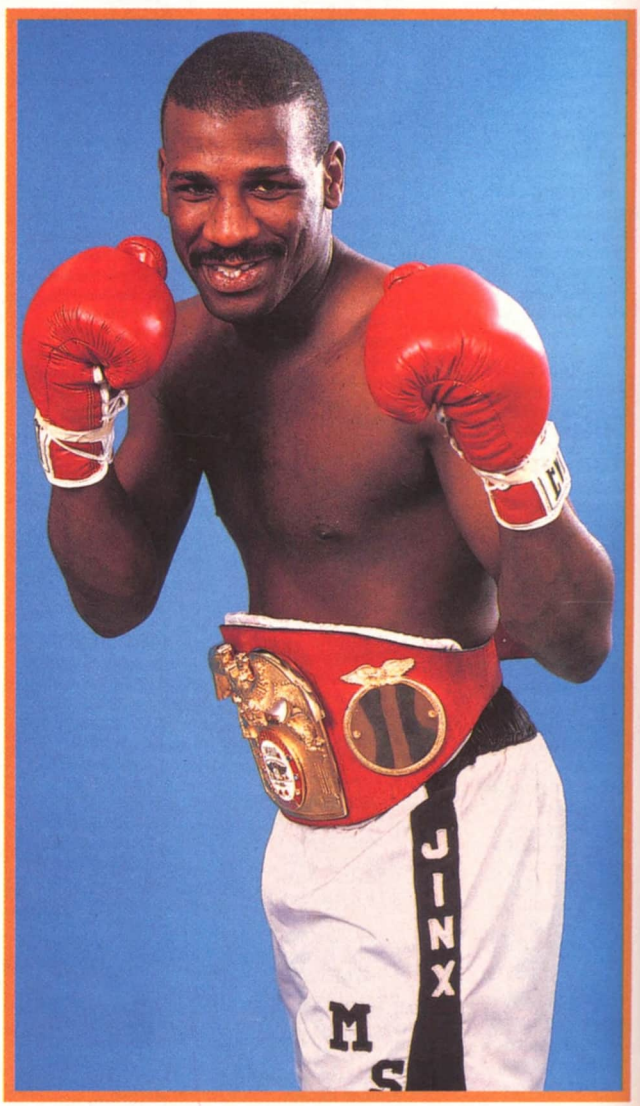
CLASSIC

From THE RING, December 1985

THERE'S ALWAYS A FIRST TIME

Michael Spinks Beats Larry Holmes For Heavyweight Title In Historic Upset

By Jack Welsh



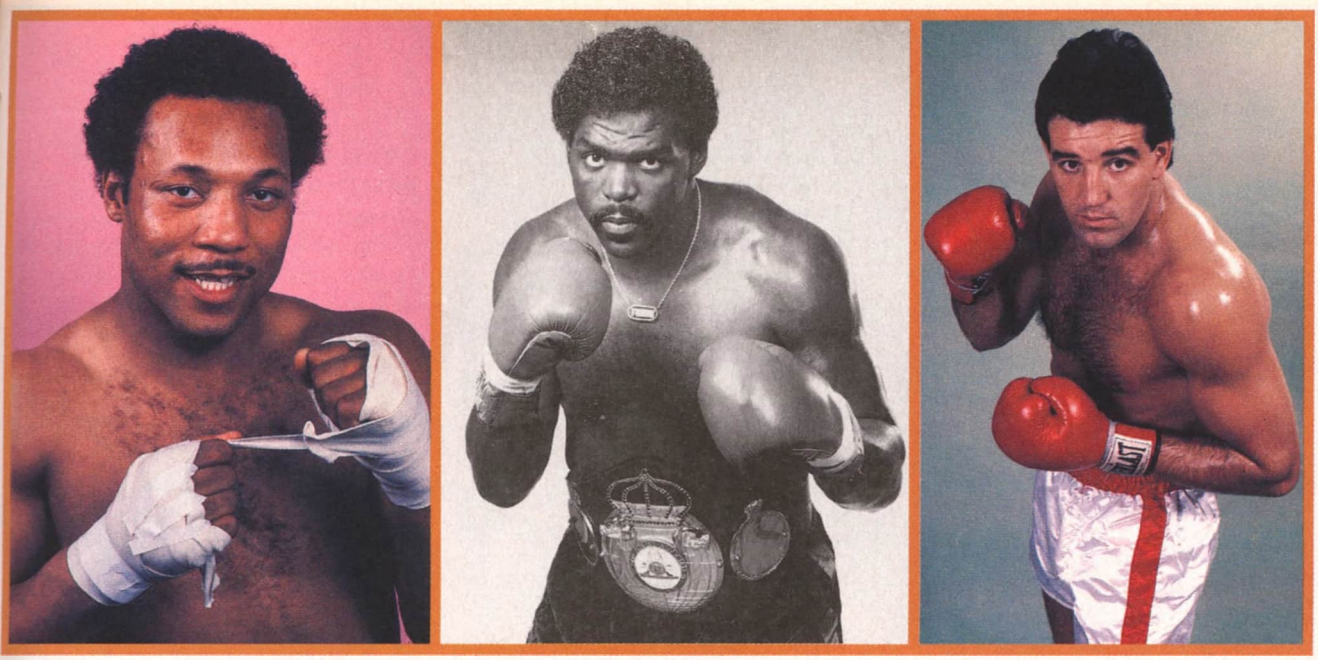
Thirteen years ago, Warner Brothers produced a movie, *The Candidate*, starring Robert Redford and a solid cast of character actors. Redford portrayed a southern California attorney, toiling for civil rights, who was drafted almost against his will to unseat a liberal incumbent in the U.S. Senate. Redford, who never really aspired to Capitol Hill, inadvertently parlayed good looks and sincerity into a surprise victory. Redford's final dialogue in the film would have been a perfect epilogue for the real life boxing shocker Michael Spinks created in Las Vegas last September.

As his newly won constituents gave their vocal approval, Redford, still in awe, stood on a balcony and asked his campaign manager, "What do we do now?"

By now, Spinks and Butch Lewis, the heavyweight champion's long-time promoter/confidante, have probably come down from the stratosphere to face similar issues after unseating Larry Holmes as the IBF heavyweight titlist in one of the most unlikely upsets in the history of the sport.

"What do we do now?" is far more applicable to Spinks than it was as a fictional line for Redford. The undefeated 29-year-old Spinks and his connections have until December to decide what he's going to do with the undisputed world light heavyweight crown he has worn so well since 1981. But more importantly, Spinks and Lewis have to seriously consider the best way to market a title he wasn't supposed to win in the first place. Holmes was already counting on victory number 50 to break the late Rocky Marciano's still safe 49-0 all-time heavyweight record.

Spinks, who had completely rebuilt his body with the help of sports nutritionist Mackie Shilstone, was a 200-pound, twisting contortionist against Holmes. His unorthodox style seemed to mesmerize Larry. At the conclusion of their 15-rounder, Spinks was the winner by a unanimous decision, and for the first time in his 13-year pro-



The big question for Spinks was what was next. The newly crowned heavyweight champ had a few options in WBC titlist Pinklon Thomas (left), WBA counterpart Tony Tubbs (center), or popular contender Gerry Cooney (right).

fessional career, Holmes was thrust into the alien roll of loser.

Spinks' poundage even surprised a confident Holmes at the weigh-in despite the defending champion's 22-pound advantage. Yet there is no way this new IBF monarch can ever get any bigger and successfully operate. Heretofore, Michael, courageously defying all traditions of the ring, was the "little" challenger. Today he is the "little" champion who will always be a genuine David against the Goliath-like pretenders to the throne lining up around the world.

Perhaps the effervescent Lewis, a 38-year-old Philadelphian who defected to New York nearly a decade back, has already put together an acceptable television package for sometime early in '86. Lord knows, Pinklon Thomas, WBC beltholder, and Tony Tubbs, his WBA counterpart, would love to be part of it. Both authentic giants were ringside watching a sad tableau of a disintegrating champion ending a near-perfect reign of seven years atop the mountain. Only the incomparable Joe Louis (1937-1949) stayed longer with 25 defenses, four more than Holmes.

Thomas and Tubbs may ultimately get their chance with Spinks in what boxing sorely needs—a series to produce an undisputed world heavyweight champion.

Another name being bandied about by Butch and others is Gerry Cooney. Now there's a name that everybody has heard of, but as is always the case when speaking of the Long Island heavyweight, one can never be sure just how serious Cooney is about fighting.

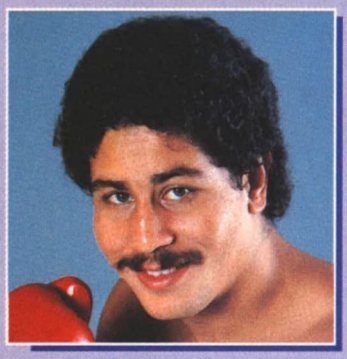
Spinks, who strengthened his credentials to 28-0 (19), would have no problem dropping back to the cruiserweight division and picking up a third title. But like the 175-pound class Spinks has decimated with 10 title defenses, there is no serious money to be made.

Michael earned $1-million as an alleged "easy little guy" for Holmes' 49th straight victory. Larry also picked up a $3.5-million check, but he paid a high price to make the deposit.

Holmes went off as a minus-$6.50 choice in Nevada's sports books. Not only did the resident experts and media types see an early knockout victory, the Riviera management was already talking with Don King about a tentative November date for Larry's projected milestone win of 50 in a row. Spinks and Lewis would relish a highly lucrative rematch, but the deposed champion, leaving a media postfight press conference, looked back over his shoulder, saying: "Forget it,

Most experts expected Larry Holmes, installed as a heavy favorite, to roll over the smaller Spinks. But Spinks had other thoughts, using his quickness and boxing skills to frustrate Holmes all night.

THE RING RATINGS, December 1985



Wilfredo Gomez

HEAVYWEIGHTS
World Champ: Michael Spinks, St. Louis, MO
1. **Pinklon Thomas,** Wyncotte, PA
2. **Larry Holmes,** Easton, PA
3. **Tim Witherspoon,** Philadelphia, PA
4. **Tony Tubbs,** Cincinnati, OH
5. **Greg Page,** Louisville, KY
6. **Gerrie Coetzee,** South Africa
7. **Trevor Berbick,** Canada
8. **Carl Williams,** New York, NY
9. **Mike Weaver,** Diamond Bar, CA
10. **Michael Dokes,** Akron, OH

CRUISERWEIGHTS
World Champ: Bernard Benton, Detroit, MI
1. **Dwight Muhammad Qawi,** Camden, NJ
2. **Eddie Mustafa Muhammad,** Brooklyn, NY
3. **Alfonzo Ratliff,** Chicago, IL
4. **Carlos (Sugar) DeLeon,** Puerto Rico
5. **Piet Crous,** South Africa
6. **Osvaldo Ocasio,** Puerto Rico
7. **Lee Roy Murphy,** Chicago, IL
8. **Bashiru Ali,** Oakland, CA
9. **John Odhiambo,** Uganda
10. **Anthony Davis,** Las Vegas, NV

LIGHT HEAVYWEIGHTS
World Champ: Vacant
1. **Marvin Johnson,** Indianapolis, IN
2. **Prince Mama Mohammad,** Ghana
3. **Willie Edwards,** Detroit, MI
4. **Eddie Davis,** Freeport, NY
5. **Jean-Marie Emebe,** Cameroon
6. **J.B. Williamson,** Inglewood, CA
7. **Bobby Czyz,** Wanaque, NJ
8. **Jim MacDonald,** Fort Worth, TX
9. **Dennis Andries,** England
10. **Leslie Stewart,** Trinidad

MIDDLEWEIGHTS
World Champ: Marvin Hagler, Brockton, MA
1. **John Mugabi,** Uganda
2. **James Shuler,** Philadelphia, PA
3. **James Kinchen,** San Diego, CA
4. **Don Lee,** Gary, IN
5. **Herol Graham,** England
6. **Robbie Sims,** Brockton, MA
7. **Doug DeWitt,** Yonkers, NY
8. **Wilfred Benitez,** Puerto Rico
9. **Tony Sibson,** England
10. **Chong-Pal Park,** Korea

JUNIOR MIDDLEWEIGHTS
World Champ: Thomas Hearns, Detroit, MI
1. **John Mugabi,** Uganda
2. **Mike McCallum,** New York, NY
3. **Carlos Santos,** Puerto Rico
4. **Davey Moore,** Bronx, NY
5. **Mark Medal,** Jersey City, NJ
6. **Buster Drayton,** Philadelphia, PA
7. **Julian Jackson,** Virgin Islands
8. **Donald Curry,** Fort Worth, TX
9. **David Braxton,** Detroit, MI
10. **Matthew Hilton,** Canada

WELTERWEIGHTS
World Champ: Vacant
1. **Donald Curry,** Fort Worth, TX
2. **Milton McCrory,** Detroit, MI
3. **Tommy Ayers,** Cincinnati, OH
4. **Maurice Blocker,** Washington, D.C.
5. **Simon Brown,** Washington, D.C.
6. **Colin Jones,** Wales
7. **Sylvester Mittee,** England
8. **Lloyd Honeyghan,** England
9. **Jerome Kinney,** Highland Park, MI
10. **Johnny Bumphus,** Clementon, NJ

JUNIOR WELTERWEIGHTS
World Champ: Vacant
1. **Lonnie Smith,** Denver, CO
2. **Ubaldo Sacco,** Argentina
3. **Bill Costello,** Kingston, NY
4. **Ronnie Shields,** Port Arthur, TX
5. **Aaron Pryor,** Cincinnati, OH
6. **Gene Hatcher,** Fort Worth, TX
7. **Patrizio Oliva,** Italy
8. **Rene Arredondo,** Mexico
9. **Terry Marsh,** England
10. **Rodolfo (Gato) Gonzalez,** Mexico

LIGHTWEIGHTS
World Champ: Vacant
1. **Livingstone Bramble,** Passaic, NJ
2. **Hector Camacho,** New York, NY
3. **Jimmy Paul,** Detroit, MI
4. **Tyrone Crawley,** Philadelphia, PA
5. **Jose Luis Ramirez,** Mexico
6. **Edwin Rosario,** Puerto Rico
7. **Darryl Tyson,** Washington, D.C.
8. **Cornelius Boza-Edwards,** Uganda
9. **Terrence Alli,** New York, NY
10. **Sammy Fuentes,** Puerto Rico

JUNIOR LIGHTWEIGHTS
World Champ: Wilfredo Gomez, Puerto Rico
1. **Julio Cesar Chavez,** Mexico
2. **Rocky Lockridge,** Maple Shade, NJ
3. **Mario Martinez,** Mexico
4. **Alfredo Layne,** Panama
5. **Roger Mayweather,** Las Vegas, NV
6. **Rafael Solis,** Puerto Rico
7. **Kenny Baysmore,** Washington, D.C.
8. **Johnny de la Rosa,** Detroit, MI
9. **Francisco Tomas Cruz,** Brazil
10. **Dwight Pratchett,** Gary, IN

FEATHERWEIGHTS
World Champ: Barry McGuigan, Ireland
1. **Azumah Nelson,** Ghana
2. **Eusebio Pedroza,** Panama
3. **Juan LaPorte,** Puerto Rico
4. **Marcos Villasana,** Mexico

you've got my title ... I'm going home and spend some of my millions."

Forget all of that jazz about the Spinks Jinx, or the ghost of Marciano haunting Holmes. Father Time was the culprit every step of the way, aided and abetted by the talents of Spinks.

By the time that ring announcer Chuck Hull revealed the verdict to the 11,192 gathered in the Riviera's outdoor stadium, Holmes was 35 going on 70, unable to do what he had to do—win the final round—to make his 21st title defense a success. It wasn't so much that Spinks took the champion's laurels in a decisive manner as it was Holmes' inability to capitalize offensively when it appeared he had the skittering challenger in jeopardy along the ropes.

It is a malady that has stricken most of his predecessors who stayed too long at the fair. Holmes spotted numerous chinks in Spinks' unorthodox defense, but his reflexes betrayed him when the big bombs were needed. Larry's once-rapier jab was little more than a flick, and the right hand, which claimed most of those 34 victims inside the distance, was virtually nonexistent.

Holmes must have felt his legs were encased in cement as he tried to press his light-hitting tormentor. Larry's frustrating

5. **Jackie Beard,** Detroit, MI
6. **Min-Keun Oh,** Korea
7. **Calvin Grove,** Pottstown, PA
8. **Bernard Taylor,** Knoxville, TN
9. **Tyrone Jackson,** New York, NY
10. **Adrian Arreola,** Los Angeles, CA

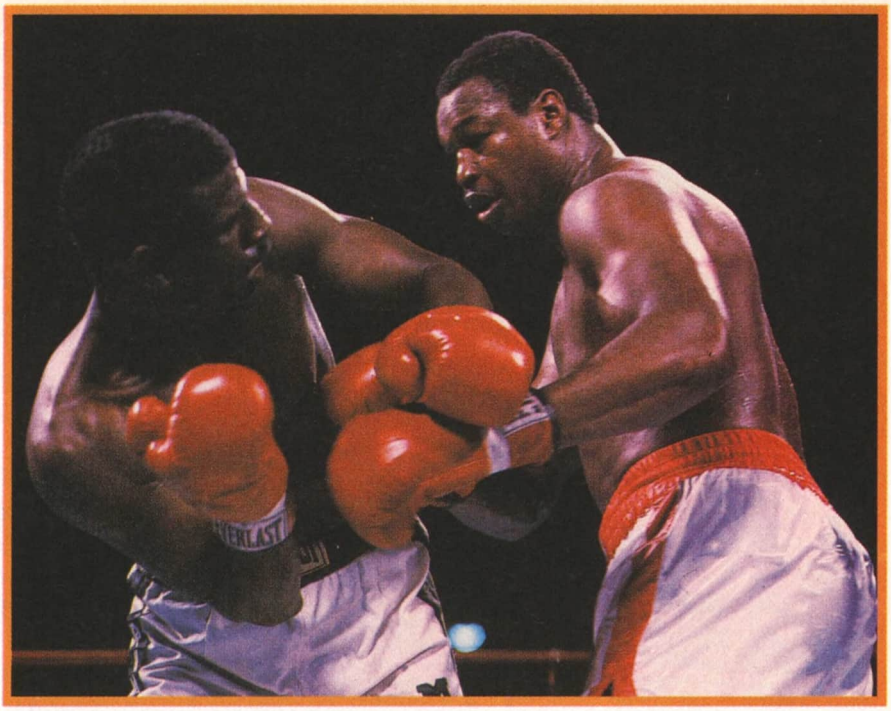
JUNIOR FEATHERWEIGHTS
World Champ: Vacant
1. **Victor Callejas,** Puerto Rico
2. **Lupe Pintor,** Mexico
3. **Juan (Kid) Meza,** Los Angeles, CA
4. **Loris Stecca,** Italy
5. **Jaime Garza,** Los Angeles, CA
6. **Greg Richardson,** Youngstown, OH
7. **Julian Solis,** Puerto Rico
8. **Jorge Ramirez,** Los Angeles, CA
9. **Oscar Muniz,** Los Angeles, CA
10. **Harold Petty,** Fort Worth, TX

BANTAMWEIGHTS
World Champ: Richard Sandoval, Los Angeles, CA
1. **Jiro Watanabe,** Japan
2. **Miguel Lora,** Colombia
3. **Khaosai Galaxy,** Thailand
4. **Gaby Canizales,** Laredo, TX
5. **Daniel Zaragoza,** Mexico
6. **Freddie Jackson,** Houston, TX
7. **Rafael Orono,** Venezuela
8. **Jerome Coffee,** Nashville, TN
9. **James Pipps,** Vidor, TX
10. **Elly Pical,** Indonesia

FLYWEIGHTS
World Champ: Sot Chitalada, Thailand
1. **Jung-Koo Chang,** Korea
2. **Gabriel Bernal,** Mexico
3. **Hilario Zapata,** Panama
4. **Joey Olivo,** Los Angeles, CA
5. **Sugar Baby Rojas,** Miami, FL
6. **Dodie Penalosa,** Philippines
7. **Jose DeJesus,** Puerto Rico
8. **Alonzo Gonzalez,** Los Angeles, CA
9. **Isidro Perez,** Mexico
10. **Candido Tellez,** Mexico

bid to cut off the ring was more of a lunge or a lurch than genuine stalking. Despite Spinks' pitty-pat punches in a strike-and-retreat strategy, Holmes had lumps over and under both eyes at the end. Swollen lips also showed what the rapidity of leather can do. Sometimes a perplexed Holmes looked at Spinks, as if to say, "What the hell am I doing here?"

Spinks was refreshingly honest and surprisingly unmarked in the post-mortem session.

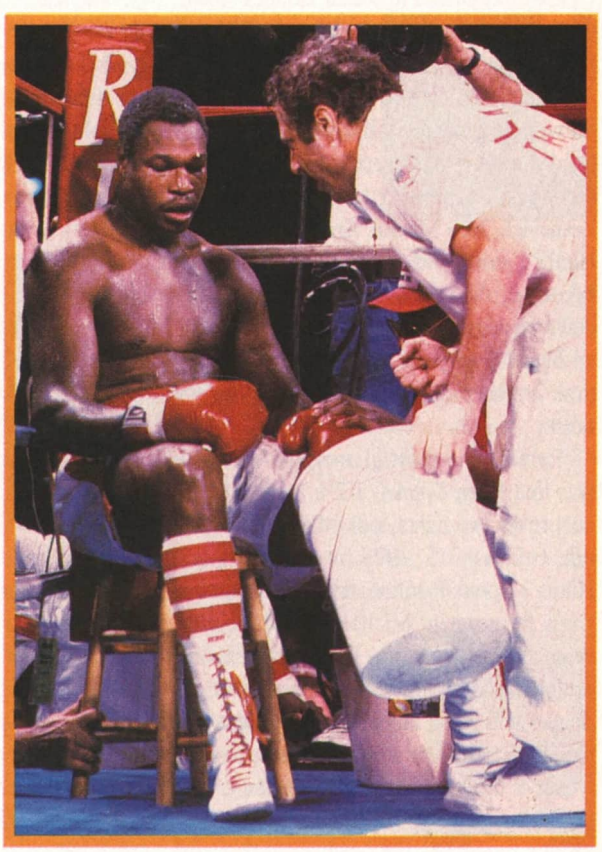


There were times when Spinks looked like a novice, jumping from one side to the other, falling away from Holmes' jab. Spinks later explained that the weird moves all served a purpose.

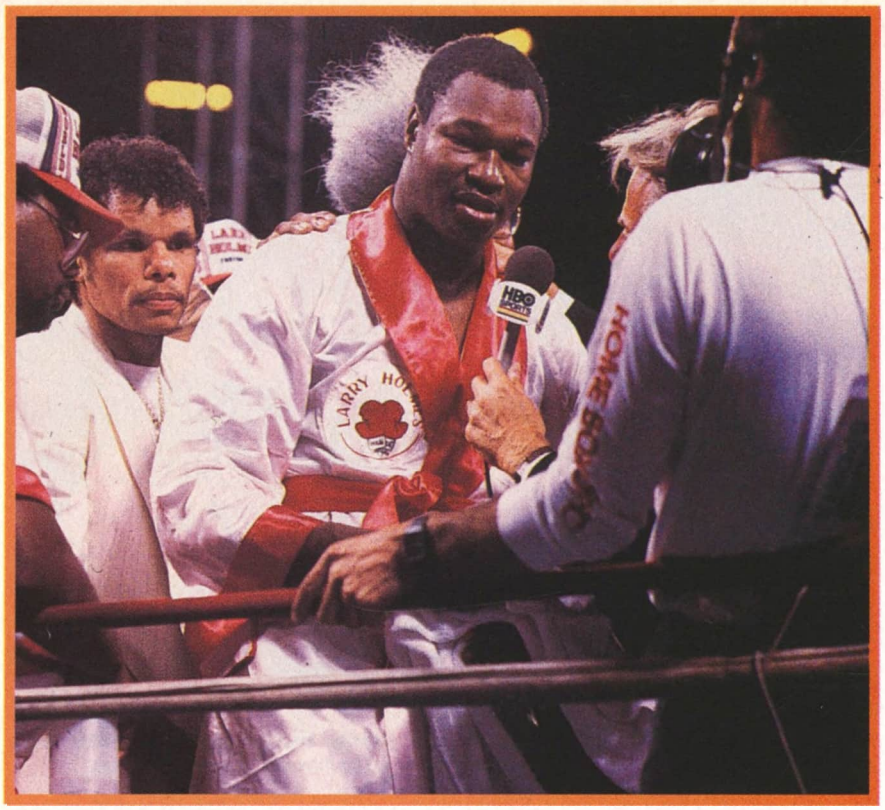
"I think I might have dreamed it once, but I really never saw myself winning this fight. But I knew what I had to do and I did it," Spinks said. "Larry Holmes never hurt me. Holmes couldn't land the jab the way he wanted because all my crazy head feints were breaking his rhythm. He was also having trouble with his right. Larry always liked to say he'd get his opponents drunk before he mugged them. Well, he never got me drunk. I didn't really hurt Holmes either because if I did I would have seen it in his eyes. But I felt I was hitting him more than he was hitting me, and that's what it's all about."

There were times when Spinks looked like a novice. He was either jumping from side to side, falling away from Holmes' jab, or almost leaping into Holmes' thick torso behind a flurry of mediocre punches. Spinks later explained the weird moves all served a purpose.

"I wanted to mesmerize and hypnotize Larry with my movements. It worked. I know it bothered him. He thought I was having an athletic fit," the IBF titlist laughed.



As early as the third round, Holmes' trainer Richie Giachetti was in his fighter's face about throwing more punches. Sitting on the stool, Holmes always nodded in agreement, but nothing happened.



Holmes looked old and tired after 15 rounds. "The Easton Assassin" was lumped up over and under both eyes, and it was Spinks who captured the decision by scores of 143-142 (twice) and 145-142.

"But I had to argue with the referee [Carlos Padilla] to tell him to watch Holmes' rough stuff. Every time I was in close with Holmes, I got his elbow in my face."

The 1976 Montreal Olympic middleweight gold medalist succeeded most nobly where such erstwhile greats as Georges Carpentier, Billy Conn, Gus Lesnevich, Joey Maxim, Archie Moore, John Henry Lewis, and Bob Foster failed, thus becoming the first 175-pound champion to dethrone a heavyweight in office.

Spinks' surprise also made it the first time brothers ever reigned as heavyweight titlists.

Perhaps the most glamorous feat of all was that Leon Spinks, a 7-1 longshot with only seven pro fights, took Muhammad Ali's title February 15, 1978, in the Las Vegas Hilton's Sports Pavilion, only a few hundred yards from where Michael turned Holmes' dream into a nightmare. Whatever their final evaluation as fist fighters, Michael and Leon Spinks will stand alone in boxing annals as the ultimate entry in forging the most unlikely pair of upsets in heavyweight history.

Although there were no knockdowns, Spinks generated repeated roars from the crowd with his willingness to take the fight to Holmes from the third round on. In the fourth round, Spinks caught Holmes with several stinging hooks and dazzled the crowd in the seventh round when he stung Holmes with three straight overhand rights.

Trainer Richie Giachetti bordered on apoplexy down the stretch as he literally screamed at Holmes to "quit trying for a one-punch knockout." Sitting on the stool, Holmes always nodded in agreement, but nothing happened. The Cleveland conditioner even tried to psych the fading champion by leading cheers just off the ring apron as the final round started.

Spinks, always dubbed awkwardly clever, had been that way all night, and rushed out for the last gasp by lunging and flailing away at his weary adversary. Spinks was still able to turn and walk away from Holmes' jab, but for an instant it appeared Holmes might reach down one more time and survive with a desperation rally. Working Spinks along the ropes near the latter's corner, Holmes landed his two best rights of the fight to the head and followed up with a left.

Michael reeled into the ropes and appeared dazed as he grabbed the top strand, but the invincible Father Time had a stranglehold on Holmes and wouldn't let go. Unlike those prime nights when he had an opponent in trouble, Holmes hesitated, with his left at his side and the right cocked.

Spinks literally ran his way to the crown, especially in those final 60 seconds, again using strange lateral movements behind peek-a-boo gloves. Spinks even had time for a light flurry. And in the final tabulations, he had caught the eye of the judges. However, most ringsiders who felt Spinks did enough overall to merit the decision gave the 15th round to Holmes on the strength of that three-punch salvo.

Scoring in boxing is highly subjective, and it was proven on a balmy night in this storied mecca of chance. Holmes appeared to land the harder blows (his best rounds being the first, second, fifth, ninth, 11th, 12th, 14th, and 15th), but Spinks dished out the larger volume. Had Holmes officially been given the final round, he would have retained the crown, but the voting, where it counted, went to Spinks—Dave Moretti and Harold Lederman finished up with 143-142, and Larry Wallace, 145-142, all for the new champion.

Wearing brown-tinted glasses and a red and blue jump suit, Holmes, flanked by his brother, Jake, and Giachetti, finally got through the human crunch filing out of the Riviera's one-time arena to face media inquisitors.

Holmes admitted he hesitated in throwing the right hand because "I wanted to be sure it landed."

"Anyway, I'm gonna quit. I don't need boxing anymore. There will be no rematch unless it's with my wife, Diane. I've made over $67-million. I own a $6-million hotel, parking lots, restaurants, and bars back home. I have two Rolls Royces paid for, and $99 million in the bank."

Holmes should have left it at that. Then nobody would have gasped in disbelief as he became a study in bad taste.

Throughout his brilliant career, "The Easton Assassin" has always needed his ego massaged and his celebrity reassured. Yet there have been times when the slightest negative press has transformed the usually gracious Holmes into a surly, churlish man who speaks before thinking.

Too bad it happened in Holmes' ungraceful swan song. Peter Marciano, Rocky's brother, and the deceased champion's daughter, Mary Anne, 21, and son, Rocky Jr., 17, were among the assembly jammed in the Riviera's convention area to hear the fighters reflect on their exercise with leather. They

ended up bearing the brunt of Holmes' disappointment.

"On the day of the fight, I got upset with some of the things I was hearing from the Marciano family, especially his brother," Holmes sulked. "I think he's in the back. I've never taken anything away from Marciano, and I think his family owes me a great deal for bringing him back to life.

"Not knowing anything about Rocky, not trying to put him down, but it would be so easy for me to do it. In spite of what everybody said, I do what I want. This is probably why I lost. I tell it like it is and I'll do it till I die. I'm a 35-year-old fighting young men and he was 25 years old fighting old men. There was also something about Marciano's early record, but that's not important now. I could easily put him down. If you want to get technical about it, Rocky couldn't carry my jockstrap."

Holmes then stretched on the dais, trying to spot Marciano's brother. "If I hurt your feelings back there, Sonny. Isn't your name Sonny? (Larry was informed it was Peter.) Well, Peter, if I hurt your feelings back there, so [bleeping] what?"

Marciano seemed to be trying to answer, but Holmes quickly drowned him out.

"Wait a minute … this is my show. You've been invited here by Caesars Palace. You're freeloading on your brother even after he's dead. If it wasn't for me, you would have never been invited by Caesars Palace with all expenses paid."

Realizing his super faux pas, which would soon echo throughout the world, Holmes tried to reverse his field.

"Let me explain to you all what I've said. Rocky was one of the greatest fighters of all-time. I said anybody who could accomplish a record of 49-0, even if he fought all bums, which he didn't, was something special. It was just in the last two years that I found out what a great fighter Marciano was. I'm sorry you [Peter] took that out of context. I would have loved to have broken the record, and I would have loved to have met him.

"If I didn't respect Rocky, I wouldn't have his pictures all over my house and in my restaurant. I'd also like to invite you [Peter] to my house in Easton and show you all my souvenirs, many of Rocky. And if you invited me, I'd be happy to come to your house in Brockton. I hope we can have a drink later and there's no hard feelings."

Less than 24 hours after arriving back in Easton from Las Vegas, Holmes told the wire services, "I want to offer my apologies to Rocky Marciano's family for the remarks I made at the press conference. I have no hard feelings toward Rocky Marciano."

Unlike Holmes' inane tirades, Marciano's offspring did not lose their cool.

"I was rooting for Michael Spinks … but I always root for any challenger against Holmes," informed Rocky Jr.

Holmes basically didn't reach for an alibi in a fight where the full impact of such a monumental defeat may still be settling in.

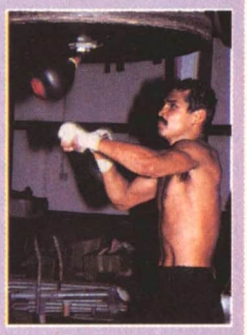
"I want to thank the WBC, WBA, and especially the IBF," boxing's apprentice retiree said. "And of course, the writers. Even the ones writing negatively, because you guys put me where I am."

Larry Holmes appears financially set for life, so don't look for a comeback unless somebody comes along waving immense green, which he has obviously found irresistible. Holmes and his family now have a lifetime for reflection on what might have been, plus the burden of knowing greed can be a vicious enemy. ■

THE RING, December 1985

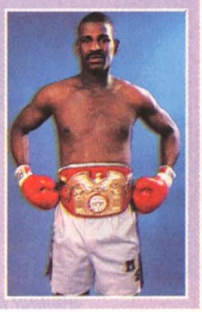
***The Cover*:** Michael Spinks was all over this issue of THE RING after his stunning upset of Larry Holmes. Most thought Holmes would easily defeat the much smaller man, and Spinks may have even surprised himself with the 15-round unanimous decision.

***Barry The Great*:** Barry McGuigan did more than just win the WBA featherweight belt, the pint-sized waif eased the tension of political and religious bigotry that threatened to tear apart Ireland. McGuigan's fights in Belfast routinely filled 7,000-seat King's Hall, bringing both Catholics and Protestants together.



***Arguello's Agony*:** Alexis Arguello, a hero to Nicaragua, experienced a precipitous demise after retiring from boxing. The three-division former titlist had a bout with cocaine, his finances collapsed, and his 10-year marriage to his third wife nearly ended. Sadly, Arguello decided toward the end of '85 to come out of retirement.

***Let's Do It Again*:** Close fights, like Gary Hinton's 15-rounder with Aaron Pryor, were cause enough for a rematch in the past. THE RING speculated as to why there was such a dearth of rematches in the mid-1980s. TV money played a big reason why fighters and their managers avoided rematches. The other obstacle was mandatory opponents forced on titleholders by the alphabet groups.



***Fighter Of The Month*:** The fight was far from a classic, but Michael Spinks' unanimous decision over heavyweight champion Larry Holmes was certainly historic. Spinks became the first light heavyweight champ to win the heavyweight title, despite the predictions of most that he would fail.

THE FIGHT DOCTOR

THE KNOCKOUT: PART ONE

By Margaret Goodman, MD

Ask any ring physician if he or she would prefer to see a boxer take a beating round after round or suffer a quick knockout, and the physician will surely pick the latter. Why? Because there is less chance of brain damage, a better chance for complete recovery, and the boxer is free from further immediate punishment.

While there are no definitive studies, ring deaths seldom result from one final punch. Rather, it is much more likely that the deceased boxer suffered an accumulation of blows in the ring/gym, or had some pre-existing condition such as an aneurysm (a weak balloon-like artery).

What happens to cause a knockout? To put it bluntly, a knockout results from a "short-circuiting" of brain function by temporarily disrupting circulation. The brain, encased in spinal fluid, has the consistency of hard custard. As the skull is struck, the brain shifts and the fluid absorbs the shock. There are two types of blows that result in a knockout:

Acceleration blow: A non-moving head is struck by a rapidly moving punch that propels the brain. A hook or roundhouse punch rotates the head, while a straight punch shoots the head backward (hyperextension). As a result, the brain is compressed against the skull, and circulation in the neck is temporarily cut off.

Deceleration blow: A moving head strikes an immoveable object such as the canvas or another head. Each of these blows may stretch or tear vessels connecting the brain to its coverings and result in a blood clot on the surface or within the brain.

A concussion is the mildest and most common form of acute head injury that happens to fighters. By definition, any boxer hurt enough to be stopped by head blows has a concussion. There does not have to be loss of consciousness. A boxer can fight or spar with a concussion, but continuing to take punishment can lead to permanent brain damage.

PHOTO BY CHRIS FARINA

Manuel Medina receives an acceleration blow to the side of the jaw

A concussion, however, is not easy to diagnose. Typically, when the ringside physician goes to check a fighter between rounds, he or she is looking for signs of a concussion. Very often, the boxer himself won't recognize them, neither will his trainer.

Blows to the head during a bout are not the only factors leading to a knockout. What happens prior to a fight can also play a significant role.

"Some of these guys don't live right," said veteran trainer Don Turner. "They spend too much time making weight, then after the weigh-in they do everything to get their weight up."

In addition, Turner said …

"They wear rubber suits, spar too many rounds, get hurt in the gym, and are too preoccupied with other things. Too many trainers are afraid to tell fighters the truth. They are either in it for the money or afraid they will get fired."

Bouie Fisher, THE RING's 2001 trainer of the year,

agrees that too many fighters take unnecessary punishment in the gym.

"They spar like it is the championship, then refuse to take a few days off," said Fisher. "I always try to use large size gloves, 18 or 20 ounce, even for middleweights, because the bigger the gloves, the less the punishment. The less the gym punishment, the better your career will be."

Conditioning guru Mackie Shilstone, who worked with both Michael Spinks and Roy Jones when they successfully moved from light heavyweight to heavyweight, notes that there are things that fighters can do in the gym that help prevent suffering a knockout.

"I have created an isometric program in three planes of motion. I put manual resistance on the neck, rotate from a neutral position to back, and from right to left," said Shilstone. "What knocks out a fighter is the rapid jerking and twisting of the neck."

While Shilstone understands the need for strong trapezius muscles, he believes tense muscles lead to more injuries and knockouts.

"The relaxed state is most effective," he said. "When an athlete falls, if he's relaxed, far fewer injuries occur."

There are also many other factors that can prevent or predispose a boxer to knockouts.

Genetics: This could easily be listed as having good luck. Heredity, family history, and genetics are all factors. If a boxer has a family history of aneurysm, stroke (especially at a young age), heart disease, high blood pressure, dementia/Alzheimer's disease, or diabetes, that boxer may need to reevaluate the decision to box. And if the boxer decides to proceed, a close medical check-up should follow every bout.

Anatomy: Some fighters have what is called a "glass jaw," which refers to the lack of strength of the temperomandibular (jaw) joint in absorbing the force of impact transmitted to the skull when a fighter is struck directly on the chin. This force can directly disrupt brain function and the fighter drops. Good anatomy plays a part in how the lower jaw is connected to the skull, but crooked or absent teeth are also factors.

Well-made mouthguard: A mouthguard is typically one of the last things a fighter invests in, but is one of the most valuable pieces of equipment a boxer can buy to protect against acute and chronic head injuries. A well-made, properly fitted mouthpiece dramatically increases the strength of the jaw, and as a result absorbs much of the force of a blow.

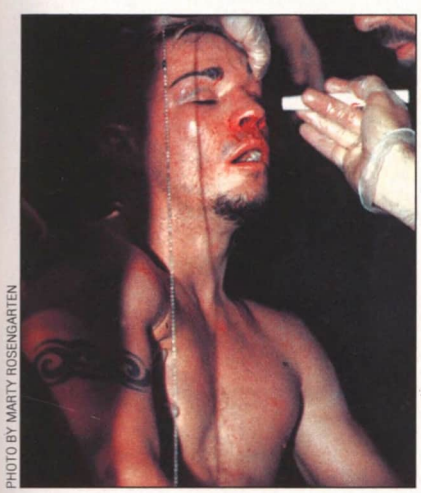


PHOTO BY MARTY ROSENGARTEN

A ringside physician checks for signs of a concussion

Chin tuck: If a boxer is able to maintain a good chin tuck, the chances of a kayo loss are less. The untucked chin is a setup for hyperextension and rotation.

Preparedness: This involves many issues, including: a) appropriate training regimens with an experienced boxing trainer; b) a safe weight-loss regimen; c) a good conditioning program; d) avoiding dehydration.

Overall, a boxer must learn what his body needs to prepare to box four rounds or 12 rounds. Cutting corners may work for younger boxers, but as their careers progress, it can frequently lead to concussions.

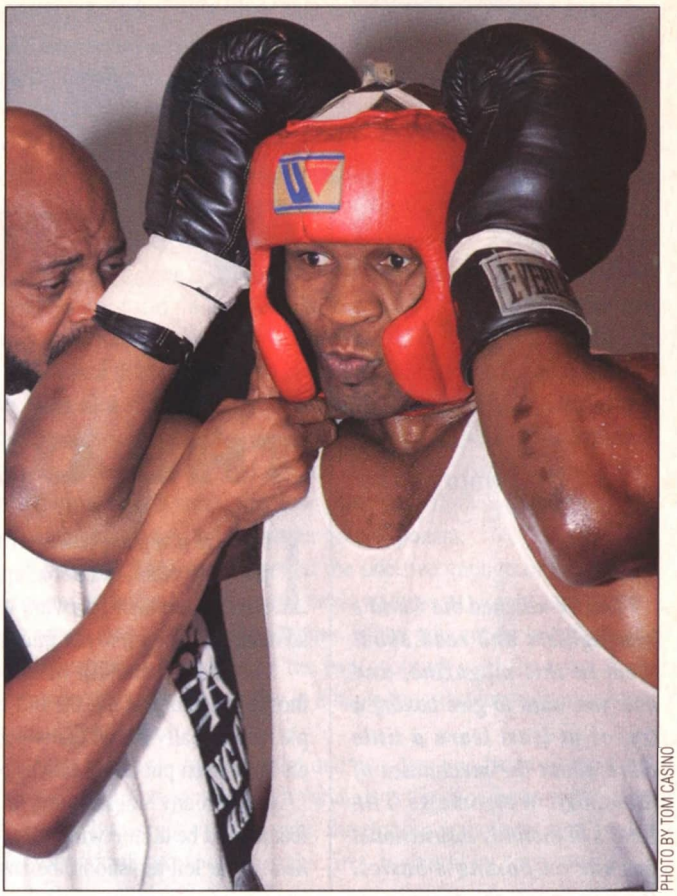


PHOTO BY TOM CASINO

Headgear can prevent cuts, but not necessarily brain damage

Drugs/alcohol/steroids: Each of these substances can directly or indirectly predispose your brain to bleeding. They are equally dangerous if used sporadically. In other words, a fighter doesn't have to be "under the influence" at the time of the bout to be susceptible to blood clots.

Safe sparring: Headgear has not proven to protect the brain against acute or chronic injury. If used properly, however, it will protect against cuts. Irrespective of headgear, fighters kayoed in the gym often continue sparring. At the very least, that fighter has suffered a concussion until proven otherwise (especially if there was loss of consciousness for even a second). The boxer needs to stop sparring and seek immediate medical attention.

If a trainer does not advise a boxer to stop after getting dropped, the fighter should find a new trainer because the current one either doesn't care about the boxer or doesn't have a clue about the dangers involved.

One final word about headgear: Frequently it sits too low on the forehead. The boxer then elevates his chin to see. From sheer repetition, this habit carries over to an actual fight and increases the susceptibility to a knockout punch.

Next column: How to recognize acute and chronic head injuries, and what they mean to a fighter's career. ■

Dr. Goodman will be happy to answer questions from readers about the medical aspects of boxing in future columns. Please send your inquiries to: The Fight Doctor, P.O. Box 1148, Fort Washington, PA 19034.

THE A, B, C & DEAS OF BOXING

By Tommy Deas

You've watched the world's best fighters and read about them in this magazine, and now you want to give boxing a try, or at least learn a little more about the mechanics of the sport. Welcome to THE RING'S bi-monthly instructional feature on boxing's basics. Bear in mind, the techniques described here are just one of many approaches to the Sweet Science. The most important thing is to find a good coach and follow his instructions. All instructions on these pages are geared for an orthodox, or right-handed, stance. If you are left-handed, merely turn everything around.

THE OLD ONE-TWO

If you're a regular reader of this column, you have learned how to throw boxing's basic punches—jab, right cross, left hook, uppercut—and learned how to defend against them. You have also learned the rudiments of footwork and how to conduct a boxing workout. Now it's time to get a little more advanced and begin to put things together.

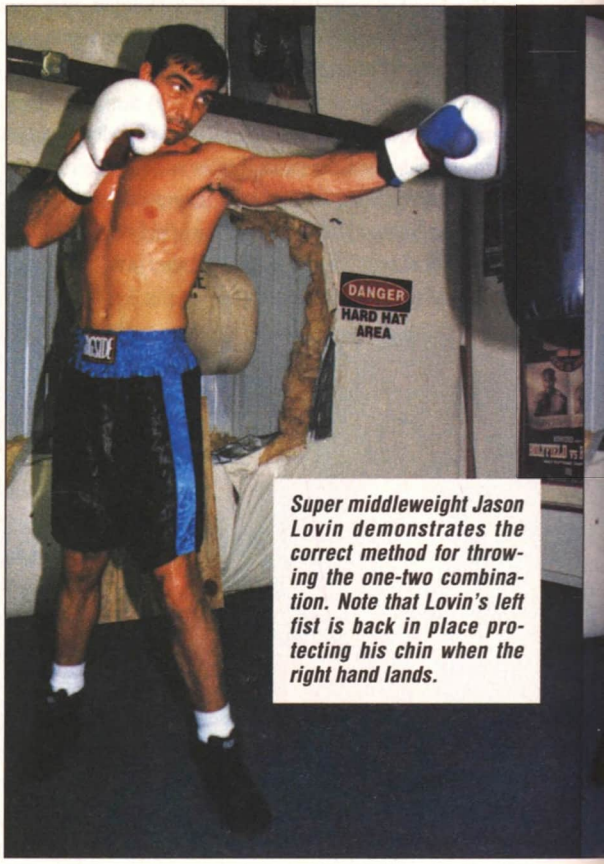
This installment will be the first in a series detailing how to throw combinations, starting with the most elementary of all, the old one-two. That's a left jab followed by a right cross. It might sound simple, and it really is, but many a great boxer has scored knockouts with this combination, and many fighters have been put to the canvas by proper use of this tool.

As with any single punch or combination, the one-two begins with a proper stance. To review, your feet should be a little wider than shoulder width apart, with the left foot facing forward toward the opponent. Your left hip should be angled in line with your left foot, toward your opponent, so that your navel can be seen clearly by someone standing to your right, with your right hip farther behind.

Keep your knees slightly bent, with your weight centered on the ball of your right foot as if you were about to sit down in a chair. Your shoulders should line up with your hips, so your left shoulder is forward and your right shoulder is behind your right ear.

Always keep your hands high with your elbows in tight to your body. Your left glove should be about eyebrow high, with your right glove tucked against your right cheek. Keep the outside seams of your gloves, the ones that line up with your little fingers, pointed toward your opponent, so your thumbs face back at you. And, of course, don't forget to keep your chin down. It should be tucked in neatly behind your left shoulder, to give added protection from your opponent's right hand.

The one-two combination begins with the left jab. To throw the jab, extend your left hand forward in a hard, fast motion toward the target. Thrust the left shoulder forward behind the punch, rotating your left hip and shoulder in a clockwise motion a few degrees with a slight push off your right foot. Extend the arm in a straight line toward the target as the other motions begin, and snap your left thumb violently downward just before it reaches the target. This



Super middleweight Jason Lovin demonstrates the correct method for throwing the one-two combination. Note that Lovin's left fist is back in place protecting his chin when the right hand lands.

corkscrew motion gives the punch a little more power, and can help to bust an opponent's nose or lip upon impact.

When the punching motion is complete, your arm should be extended straight out with the left thumb rotated parallel to the canvas, so you could set a cup of tea on the back of your hand. Always make sure to keep your weight back without leaning too far forward into the punch. If your head moves out over your left knee, you have probably balanced yourself too far forward.

Once the punch lands (or misses, for that matter), bring it back at full speed along the same line it traveled when going toward the target. Do not let it linger too long or bring it back slowly. To do so invites a counterpunch from your opponent, as does letting the glove drop toward the canvas on its way back to eyebrow level.

The second punch, the right cross, begins when the first punch starts to return to its resting place. As your left hip and shoulder move back in a counter-clockwise motion, the right shoulder and hip should begin to move forward toward the target. When you feel your right shoulder begin to pass forward by your right ear, start to extend your right glove forward, aiming at the same target where you threw your jab. If your opponent has moved his head to avoid the jab, adjust your aim and zero in on his current location.

As with the jab, snap your thumb down hard as the punch nears impact. The right arm should be fully extended by the time it lands, with your left hand back in defensive position just in front of the left side of your head at eyebrow level.

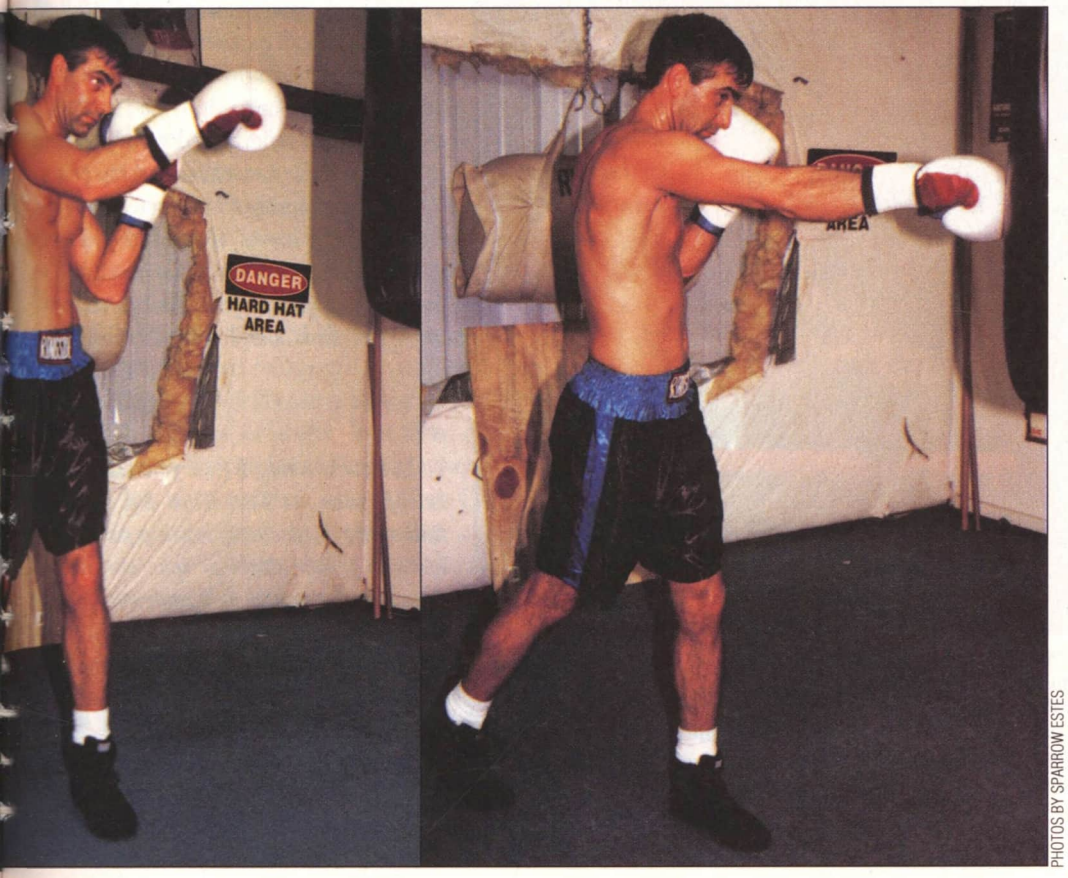
After the right has landed (or missed), bring it back the same way it came, snapping your body back into the basic boxing stance so you are ready to throw your next punch or fend off any counter-attack your opponent has planned.

Those mechanics are pretty simple to grasp. The real key to the one-two, however, is rhythm. This combination should not be thrown as "a-one-and-a-two," but more like "onetwo," with the second punch coming in rapid succession after the first. Your right hand, on its way out, should pass your left, on its way back, at about the midway point for each punch, with both out slightly in front of your body. Do not wait until the left hand is all the way back before you throw the right cross. This gives your opponent too much time to react. Thrown properly, the left hand will not only land and do some damage on its own, it will also obscure your opponent's vision so he does not see the right hand coming until it is too late to get out of the way.

Practice this combination in slow motion at first, shadowboxing in front of a mirror until you are sure you have a clear idea of the mechanics involved. As you get more comfortable, pick up your speed. Make sure to guard against making the common mistake of bringing your left hand back low when your throw your right cross, which leaves an inviting target for your opponent.

Once you have shadowboxed the one-two enough to feel confident, move to the heavybag and begin to throw it slowly again, picking up speed as you get the rhythm. When you get up to full speed, pay attention to the sound of the bag, working until the noise from the impact of your fists comes in a bang-bang fashion without a long pause in between.

After you have mastered the one-two, you can begin to work on some of its variations. One such variation is the one-one-two, two jabs followed by a right cross. Again, the rhythm is the key. Don't rush the second jab too soon after the first. It should be "one, onetwo," with the second jab and the right cross coming in rapid sequence just like the normal one-two. The first jab helps set up the combination, and the change of tempo after the first punch can catch your opponent off-guard.



PHOTOS BY SPARROW ESTES

Another variation is the one-two-one, with a final jab to follow up the original combination. This is an especially good move for a boxer who tends to lunge too far forward and get over-balanced. Finishing with a final jab helps you get your body back in line by bringing your shoulders and hips back into place. If you are over-shooting with the right hand and leaning too far forward, it will be difficult to throw the final jab. Once you are able to throw a one-two-one comfortably, you will find that your balance has probably improved.

This should give you a variety of things to work on, all based on the most basic of combinations. Keep working on it. The more you practice, the better you will get. ■

COME OUT WRITING

Letters may be edited for reasons of space and clarity. Send your comments to Come Out Writing, The Ring, P.O. Box 1148, Fort Washington, PA 19034. Or e-mail letters to comeoutwriting@yahoo.com. E-mailed letters will include the writer's e-mail address unless a city and state of origin is provided.

CHAVEZ-TAYLOR REVISITED

I just finished watching the Julio Cesar Chavez-Meldrick Taylor segment of HBO's tremendous *Legendary Nights* series. Watching the fight again invokes in me the same feelings that it did 13 years ago. Taylor fought his heart and soul out for 11 rounds 2 minutes and 58 seconds. Unfortunately, Chavez' blows and Richard Steele's controversial call did him in at the end. Although the punishment he took in the Chavez bout may have had something to do with the rapid downfall of Meldrick's career, I believe the psychological blow of losing the fight the way he did was too much for a young fighter to take.

ANTHONY DeDONA
Ozone Park, NY

WHY NO BELT FOR TONEY?

James Toney defeated Vassiliy Jirov in what was, hands down, the frontrunner for Fight of the Year. Two evenly matched fighters laid it all on the line for fortune and glory, and after a stirring battle, Toney got a well-earned decision victory. Fights like these don't come around very often, and we, as fight fans, need to appreciate them and laud the talent and courage of both fighters. In this case, however, Toney and Jirov deserved more, and it's up to your publication to make good.

Back when this fight was scheduled for January, there were two articles in London Publishing's family of boxing magazines about the Jirov-Toney bout, calling it the biggest cruiserweight battle since Evander Holyfield vs. Dwight Muhammad Qawi. So why wasn't Toney-Jirov for THE RING's cruiserweight world title? I give THE RING full credit for its new championship policy. You are attempting to correct one of the worst wrongs in our sport, and you have done a wonderful job thus far. But I'm sorry to say, you dropped the ball concerning Toney-Jirov and THE RING cruiser belt.

MATT BECHTEL
Providence, RI

PHOTO BY TOM CASINO

James Toney tags Vassiliy Jirov with a left hook en route to a unanimous decision in an early candidate for Fight of the Year. Why, asks reader Matt Bechtel, wasn't Toney awarded THE RING cruiserweight championship for the victory?

[Editor's note: When you establish a set of rules, as THE RING did with the launching of its championship policy, you have to follow them or lose credibility, even when it would be popular to do otherwise. The rules for filling championship vacancies state that a fighter has to either unify the three alphabet belts, or win a box-off between the number-one and number-two contenders, or, in certain instances, a box-off between the number-one and number-three contenders. Prior to the Jirov fight, Toney had fought only once as a cruiserweight, when he knocked out Jason Robinson in August 2002. It was, therefore, unfair to rank him any higher than number four, which means that despite the fact that Jirov went into the bout as THE RING'S number-one contender, the match did not meet the standards for a RING championship.]

PHOTO BY TOM CASINO/SHOWTIME

Was Kostya Tszyu underrated in a recent story that compared him with the all-time great junior welterweights? Reader Martin Newman thinks he was, and points out that Tszyu has not only beaten a lot of quality fighters, but also dominated most of them.

KUDOS FOR KOSTYA

I thought your article in the June 2003 issue about Kostya Tszyu's chances against the all-time greats of the junior welterweights was a little tough on Tszyu. I wouldn't kid myself into thinking Tszyu has fought anyone like Wilfred Benitez or Antonio Cervantes, but he has fought the best fighters available to him: Zab Judah, Sharmba Mitchell, Julio Cesar Chavez, Miguel Angel Gonzalez, Rafael Ruelas, and Diobelys Hurtado. Moreover, Tszyu shows his true mettle when under pressure. I've seen most of his fights, and aside from his loss to Vince Phillips, can remember few in which Kostya wasn't in absolute control. When he was knocked down by Hugo Pineda and cut by Jan Bergman, he responded swiftly and brutally with decisive knockout victories. Tszyu is very effective at setting the pace of a fight, no matter who he's in against or what style he faces. And, unlikely as it is, unless he gets to fight guys like Floyd Mayweather, Vernon Forrest (whom he beat as an amateur), or even Oscar De La Hoya, how are we going to get an accurate gauge of his place among the true greats? Suffice to say few fighters currently dominate their division like he does. So, come on, give the guy a break.

MARTIN NEWMAN
London, England

ROBBERY IN GERMANY

Beside the fact that they are both super middleweights, what is the common link between Eric Lucas and Byron Mitchell? Both of them have gotten their championship belts stolen on German soil in bouts with local boxers. Clearly, Lucas won eight rounds and dominated his fight with Markus Beyer, who fled for 12 rounds. When they announced the winner, all the German fans were surprised, as was Beyer himself. What a joke! The sport of boxing is being threatened by scams such as this. Anyway, finally Germany will have their ultimate fight between Sven Ottke and Beyer. Another sure win for Germany!

LAURENT BRIENT
Quebec City, Quebec

TAKING ADVANTAGE

If I were a Latino fight fan, I would be outraged at the exploitation of the Latino boxing market by promoters. Latinos are forced to pay for HBO-level fights such as Marco Antonio Barrera vs. Kevin Kelley and Erik Morales vs. Paulie Ayala, just to see their fistic heroes do battle. Pay-per-view boxing events should be limited to those fights in which the outcome is not certain before the opening bell. Just as non-Latino fans should not be rewarded for their apathy toward boxing, Latinos should not be punished for their enthusiasm.

We Americans have long had the opportunity to see our favorite fighters showcased in competitive fights on HBO. Why not afford the Latino community (and boxing fans everywhere) that same opportunity?

SEAN NEWMAN
Port Allen, LA

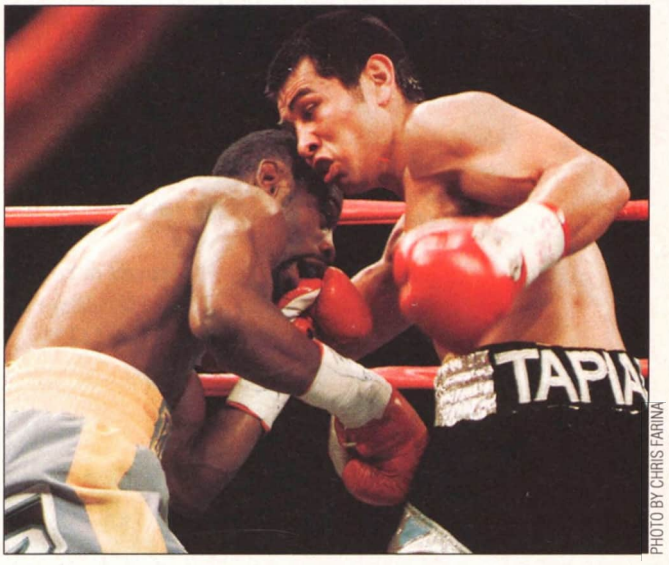


PHOTO BY CHRIS FARINA

Was Marco Antonio's Barrera's fourth-round knockout of over-the-hill Kevin Kelley really pay-per-view worthy? Reader Sean Newman doesn't think so, and he also feel that promoters are taking advantage of Latino fans' support by putting mismatches on PPV.

THE SOUTHPAW JINX

I don't know if Universum's Klaus Peter Kohl does the matchmaking himself, but if he does, he stinks at it. When Vitali Klitschko was WBO heavyweight titleholder, Kohl matched him with Chris Byrd (a slick southpaw), and we all know what happened. Then he matched Wladimir Klitschko with Corrie Sanders (a powerpunching southpaw), and Europe's most valuable fighter got beaten like a drum. Apparently Kohl never heard the golden rule of matchmaking: You never fight a southpaw unless you have to. As a result, now they have to.

A.G. PLAATJE
Emmen, Netherlands ■

LOOKING AHEAD

By Eric Raskin

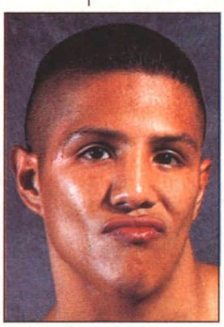
AN OPPONENT WHO WON'T GIVE VARGAS FITZ

Fitz Vanderpool has a modest 24-4-4 (13) record. He's 35 years old. He spent most of his career as a welterweight and junior welterweight. Since losing to **Hercules Kyvelos** in February '00, he's scored six wins against guys you've never heard of and an eight-round draw against journeyman **Leon Pearson**.

Oh, and he's rated number one at 154 pounds by the WBC.

In other words, he's the ideal comeback opponent for **Fernando Vargas**.

Vanderpool, the older, less-gifted brother of super middleweight contender **Syd Vanderpool,** is perfectly unthreatening, plus he brings something to the table in the form of his number-one ranking. So on July 26, when Vargas fights for the first time since losing a heartbreaking battle with **Oscar De La Hoya** and serving a nine-month suspension for testing positive for steroids, don't expect any surprises. This HBO-televised bout is a get-well fight, plain and simple, and Vargas' co-manager, **Rolando Arellano**, isn't the least bit shy about admitting that.



Vargas: Entering at the shallow end of the (Vander)pool

"Fernando's still young, but he's been in some very hard fights," Arellano said. "Remember, at 22 years old he fought **Tito Trinidad**. We want to come back at the right pace. We want to fight in July, September, and December, and be ready to fight De La Hoya on Cinco de Mayo weekend next year. If we fight someone harder on July 26, the risk might not be worth the reward, considering we're looking for the Oscar rematch.

"Vanderpool is the number-one contender. That puts us in position to fight [WBC interim titlist] **Javier Castillejo** in one of the next two fights, and then we can force a fight with Oscar. He seems to be having mixed thoughts about fighting Fernando next year, so this way we can put him in checkmate if he wants to keep his WBC title."

Vargas-Vanderpool will take place at the Grand Olympic Auditorium in Los Angeles, a move that makes a lot of sense.

"We identified that 85 percent of Fernando's fan base is middle-income, blue-collar workers—people who can't necessarily afford a weekend trip to Mandalay Bay," said Arellano. "So we're bringing the fight back to the grassroots, with over 5,000 tickets priced at $17, $27, or $47."

In other words, Vargas wants to do right by his loyal fans, in a fight that should do right by him as well.

LISTEN UP

A week before Vargas' comeback fight, his rival, De La Hoya, will be promoting his first pay-per-view event. The July 19 "Fiesta De La Hoya" show will be headlined by the long-overdue lightweight eliminator between **Stevie Johnston** and **Juan Lazcano**, with **Oscar Larios** and **Fernando Montiel** in separate bouts on the undercard … According to promoter **Dan Goossen**, a fascinating catchweight bout between cruiserweight titlist **James Toney** and middleweight world champion **Bernard Hopkins** is going to happen, possibly on September 20 on HBO. Goossen says the purse will be split 60-40 in favor of Hopkins, and the bout will be fought at the cruiserweight limit of 190 (with Hopkins expected to weigh roughly 175). With Hopkins, however, nothing is final until it's final. We shall see … Catchweight bouts between titleholders are apparently the "in" thing these days. Two of Showtime's biggest stars could be on a collision course, as 130-pound beltholder **Acelino Freitas** is considering a jump up to 140 pounds to face world champion **Kostya Tszyu**. If it happens, though, it won't be until late-2003 or sometime in '04. First, Freitas is scheduled to defend against **Jorge Barrios** of Argentina on August 9, and Tszyu is planning a title defense (no opponent yet) on September 27 at the 12,000-seat Luzhniki Arena in Moscow, Russia … WBA junior welterweight beltholder **Vivian Harris** will make his first title defense on the July 12 **Ricardo Mayorga-Vernon Forrest** II undercard, against little-known mandatory challenger **Suleiman M'Bayo**. The bout will probably not make the HBO broadcast … **Yutaka Niida**, who retired as the undefeated WBA minimumweight titlist immediately after winning the belt in August '01, has unretired (imagine that). He's coming back on July 12, and he's diving right into a title shot against current WBA king **Noel Arambulet** in Yokohama, Japan. ■

Niida: Ending two-year retirement

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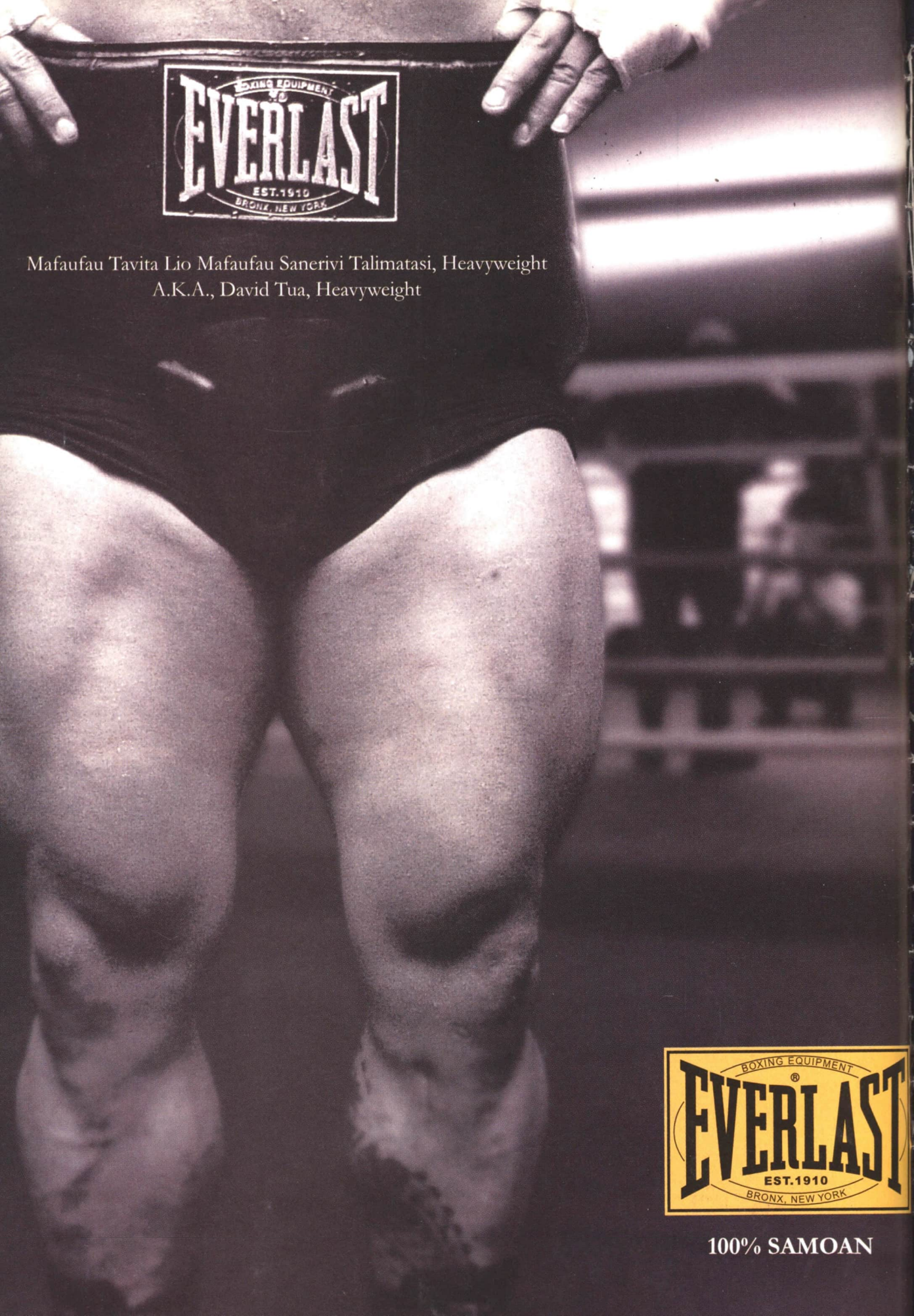
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